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SECRET MEMOIRS OF THE COURT OF FRANCE

DURING THE

XVIIth AND XVIIIth CENTURIES

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GUILLAUME CARDINAL DUBOIS
Archevesque Duc de Cambray
Prince du S.t Empire premier Ministre

MEMOIRS

OF

CARDINAL DUBOIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

By ERNEST DOWSON

WITH PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAITS
OF CARDINAL DUBOIS AND
THE DUC D'ORLÉANS

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME ONE

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PREFATORY NOTE

On entering into the Church of Saint-Roch in the Rue Saint-Honoré in Paris, there may be seen, in the right aisle, a little chapel, conspicuous among the rest as being devoid of all religious ornament. It is known as the *Chapelle des Monuments*. Amid the tombs which deck its floor, and the marble busts which line its walls, there stands a monument in white marble, whose imposing form at once arrests the gaze of the visitor. It represents a Cardinal, in full ceremonial dress, kneeling with joined hands, in the attitude of prayer. The face, turned sideways, is strangely expressive. Subtlety and determination are its most strongly-marked characteristics. A smile at once ironic and gay plays about the mouth. The narrow yet lofty brow is furrowed with many wrinkles. It is the face of the man whom history portrays as one of the most intriguing and ambitious, one of the most polished and subtle, of all French Prime Ministers and Cardinals.

Such is the tomb of Cardinal Dubois. It is the work of Guillaume Coustou, the well-known sculptor of the *Chevaux de Marly* in the Champs Elysées.

Guillaume Dubois, born in 1656 at Brives-la-Gaillarde, was the son, either of an apothecary or of a doctor of that town. After studying at Brives, and at the college of Saint-Michel in Paris, he became tutor to the young Duc de Chartres, afterwards Duc d'Orléans and Regent. The gift of a rich abbey recompensed him for having induced his pupil to marry Mademoiselle de Blois, a natural daughter of Louis XIV and

Madame de Montespan. On the death of the King, Dubois was made a Councillor of State, and, from that time forth, he devoted himself to diplomacy, in the service of which he showed a rare delicacy of tact as well as an indefatigable activity. To his address were due the friendly relations which for long existed between George I and the Regent. In 1717, he concluded, along with Lord Stanhope, the Triple Alliance of The Hague, between England, France, and Holland, which had for its object the suppression of Spanish interests. On his return to France, Dubois was made Minister of Foreign Affairs. He outwitted the Cellamare conspiracy, and robbed Philip V of Spain of the services of his minister Alberoni. In 1720 the Regent nominated him Archbishop of Cambray. In the following year Dubois was made a Cardinal, and in 1722 he became Prime Minister. His death took place on August 10th, 1723.

As regards the authenticity of these memoirs, there are differences of opinion. The anonymous writer of the introduction to the first French edition, published in Paris in 1829, gives the following story of their authorship and the difficulties which attended their publication:—

"These Memoirs," says this anonymous writer, who in all probability was M. Paul Lacroix, "which come to an end in the early part of the year 1723, appear, from several passages they contain, to have been begun only in the preceding year. It was then that Dubois, worn out by a long life of Epicurean excess, and still more by the cares of office, was able, for the first time in his long career of successful intrigue, to enjoy a certain repose. His motive for writing them lay in his desire to answer the atrocious calumnies which his enemies heaped upon him both in prose and verse. They were written entirely by his own hand, on

the Tuesdays and Saturdays of each week, and with the aid only of his prodigious memory. When Dubois died, the manuscript was stolen by one of his secretaries, named Lavergne. This fellow secretly carried it off, with the intention of, later on, selling it dearly to Dubois' heirs. Dubois, brother of the deceased, a director of civil engineers, had heard of these Memoirs, and was not a little astonished at not finding them in the inheritance. As their publication would seriously compromise the Regent as well as himself, he spared no trouble to discover into whose hands they had fallen. His efforts were, however, without result.

"Lavergne waited during several years for the death, or at least the disgrace, of the principal friends of the Cardinal, and when he thought he could do so without danger, he quietly proposed to several interested persons the acquisition of the manuscript. It was then that the Court at Versailles heard of the existence of these memoirs, and many persons there were in the utmost fear of their publication. Monsieur d'Argenson, Lieutenant of Police, was set on the track of Lavergne, who was arrested and sent to the Bastille. The Memoirs were taken from him and buried among the archives of the Foreign Office.

"It was there, some years later, that they fell into the hands of the Comte de Maurepas. Maurepas took a singular delight in reading the manuscript, and he it was who first discovered the literary value as also the historic importance of these Memoirs. Maurepas was in the habit of having copies made —for his own personal use—of such books as pleased him, which for certain reasons it was inadvisable to publish. He therefore had the whole of the original Dubois manuscript copied, and he kept this copy among his own private papers.

"On Maurepas' death, which occurred in 1781, this copy

passed into the hands of a certain writer named Mercier, in whose family it remained, until it was at length published in 1829. When search was made for the original manuscript it could no longer be found."

Such is the story which was current in Paris at the time of the first publication of these Memoirs. The evidence of recent researches tends rather to regard the work as apocryphal. The Comte de Seillac, in his *l'Abbé Dubois*, published in 1862, one of the most important works on the life of the Cardinal, disregards the Memoirs altogether. M. Ch. Aubertin, in his interesting *L'Esprit publique au* XVIII^e^ *siècle*, published in 1873, comes to the conclusion that they are probably spurious; while M. Quérard, in his *Les Supercheries littéraires dévoilées*, 1869, decides that they were composed by the above-mentioned Paul Lacroix, and founded on a certain *Vie Privée du Cardinal Dubois*, published in London in 1789.

After all, is the question of the authenticity of these Memoirs of such importance as to cause the reader, who turns over their facile pages, the embarrassment of an instant's regret? It can scarcely be said that it is. Whether from the pen of Dubois himself or not, they form one of the most interesting and striking documents relating to the times of the Regency, all the amiable characteristics of which they faithfully reflect.

MEMOIRS OF CARDINAL DUBOIS

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THESE MEMOIRS—BIRTH OF DUBOIS—HIS PARENTAGE —WAS HE EVER BAPTISED? — THE FIRST ARMS OF AN APOTHECARY — M. LEFEBURE — HE ENTERS THE JESUIT COLLEGE

I AM growing old, as my infirmities begin to warn me. As I sought the other day for the date of my birth, passing from memory to memory, I decided to make, and set down in writing, an examination of my conscience. I think I am better than my reputation; moreover, there is no maid so homely that she takes no pleasure in seeing her image in the glass. I am about, therefore, to retrace all the events of my life, in order to judge myself impartially, as perhaps posterity will judge me, laughing at my peccadilloes, which have not prevented me from becoming a Cardinal, and rendering justice to the talent which has carried me to the ministry, in which I have maintained myself for some time past, against all winds and tides. I am writing my memoirs, in the first place for myself; but I allow my heirs to publish them, if they are not afraid of my posthumous frankness; for I mean to tell everything, be it good or bad, even though I should put my flatterers to the blush for their panegyrics, and sometimes give the victory to my detractors; but if, as I hope, I shall be able to give the lie, more than once, to both parties, I shall reap my compensation.

I was born at Brives-la-Gaillarde on the 6th of September 1656, the *legitimate* son of Jean Dubois and Marie Dujoyet. As I owe it to no one save myself that I have become what I am, I have not had the vanity to create myself a genealogy. My ancestors, whoever they may be, will pardon me for knowing but my father simply; many a marquis cannot say as much.

My father, of Bearnais origin, was an apothecary by trade. During his two years of marriage he had seemed to wait with patience till Heaven should send him an offspring. His wife was in greater haste, and the talk of the town attributed the accomplishment of her wishes to chance. I should not know how to authenticate this anecdote; but I will repeat it, in order to show a proof of my impartial frankness, even at the expense of the authors of my being. An aged bachelor of Brives wedded a young lady of sixteen, doubtless having an eye to the old proverb of the "old cock and the young pullet." On the eve of his marriage he assembled the wiseacres of the faculty in the town to hold a council on his scanty capacity. Opinions differed: according to some, nature herself had admirable resources at every age; according to others, a certain drug, duly prescribed, would serve the sexagenarian bridegroom in lieu of youth. The latter, without hesitation, chose of the two chances of success what seemed the surest and promptest. The prescription was sent to the pharmacy of my worthy father. M. Jean Dubois set to work at once, and composed a potion which would resuscitate a corpse. This precious philtre had not to be delivered until the following day; it was growing late, and my mother was urging her spouse to come to bed. He, whose fatigue gave him a like advice, undressed, blew out his candle and lay down maritally; but in the middle of the night he awoke complaining of a parching thirst. His better half, disturbed in her slumber, rose in haste, and groped at random for something to assuage this inopportune thirst; her hand lighted upon the blessed potion: it was indeed a specific. Nine months later I arrived to attest to its virtues and become doubly the pride of my father.

My enemies have excited scandal by spreading abroad the rumour that I had not received baptism. I should be embarrassed to prove by authentic documents that I have been laved from the original blot. I still feel within me all the vicious tendencies of a true son of Adam; but to deny my baptism is, after all, only an epigram against the infallibility of the Pope who made me a Cardinal. In any case it is too late now to repair the omission. I know not why my poor mother, so pious in other respects, should have exposed me to a reproach through which I am tempted to blush for her. I have heard say, amongst other

versions, that it was intended I should be baptised on the same day as one of my cousins, who had made his entry into this world at almost the same hour with me, and that by some inconceivable error my cousin received the sacrament twice, the one destined for me being included. It was on the 24th of September, so they say, that the Church made this mistake to my disadvantage. None the less, in the register of events my name occurred; but, the double function having been discovered later, the page which certified my baptism was torn out for the honour of the parish. This story is a fable invented to give the court a laugh; and I myself was the first to laugh at it. The Marquise de La Ferté said to me one day, with those eyes which make her libertine of a husband inexcusable:

"M. l' Abbé, is it true that you are not baptised?"

"I do not know, madame," I answered; "in any case I have no lack of names."

The Duc d' Orléans had a moment before given me one of his most energetic ones.

My childhood had necessarily to be largely concerned with the apothecary's shop, and I will pass over details which would only be interesting to professors of the art. At the age of six I was sent to school, where, during two years, I learned to read passably, to write badly, and above all to submit to chastisement. I will pass over in silence the colics with which I gratified masters and pupils, by putting a dose of antimony in the soup-kettle. This playful trick, which might have led to dire results, only ended in my being sent back to the paternal roof sooner than I had hoped for. My father was angry at first, then grew calm again, as is the way of fathers the world over; and he even was pleased to show me the first principles of the profession. He wished, he said, to make me the most skilful apothecary in France, or at least in Limousin. He taught me the names and nature of the drugs; but I preferred to waste my time in playing in the street with scamps who thrashed me and stole my money. The rapid progress I made in these fine studies may be conceived. My father, displeased at my idleness, was sometimes brutal with his lessons; he was at once the father and the irritated apothecary. My tricks were capable of compromising the health of a whole town. When I happened to have committed some mistake or negligence in the preparation

of a prescription, I required, in order to return to favour, the intercession of my mother, who preferred me to a brother whom I had preceded in this world by a few years. A piece of mischief which I cannot recall without laughing exiled me anew from the paternal roof.

Opposite the shop lived Madame de Chatelude, a young and pretty widow, whose view had acted on my precocious twelve years in the manner of the potion to which, according to the chronicles of the place, I owed my existence. The ne'er-do-wells whom I frequented had prepared my education; it was for myself to do the rest. The figure and divine contours of Madame de Chatelude inflamed my imagination, particularly when I contemplated her at her window. With the curiosity natural to a young rogue of my age, I envied my father's lot, who was required from time to time to exercise the most delicate functions of his ministry upon this lady; and I asked myself aside, if, during the time of the operation, he kept his eyes shut or open. One evening, when my father had gone to blood a patient, Madame de Chatelude's waiting-maid came with a message which commanded the instant attendance of the apothecary with his arms and baggage. I immediately conceived the project of replacing my father. The instrument, charged according to the prescription, was done up in my white apron, and I repaired with pride to the patient. I was engrossed with the importance of my powers, and felt taller by two feet. "What do you want, my little man?" said the duenna who introduced me.

"Madame," I answered politely, "I come on behalf of M. Jean Dubois; my father is not at home, and I fear will not return till late; that is why I have come in his place. . . ."

With these words, I raised the metal tube with the most significant gesture.

The old woman understood my intention. "Holy Virgin," she cried, "do we stand in need of a child?"

"Child!" I cried; "do you think one needs to be six feet high to reach what the apothecary looks at?"

My sally was unsuccessful. "Come along, piece of impudence," said the chamber-maid, "give it to me."

"Never!" I interrupted her; "this is my affair, and you shall not show me such an insult."

Then came the quarrel. I resisted stoutly; she redoubled

her efforts. I saw that the nozzle of the syringe was directed towards the duenna's face; and the spray of water which I turned on it, with well-directed aim, put an end to the combat. My misfortune had it that, at the cries of my female adversary, the door opened, and the vast perruque of the doctor who appeared received its share of the deluge. I took to flight, in spite of my victory; and my father proved to me next day that all is not profit in the life of an apothecary.

This adventure, however, attested to most excellent dispositions; and I know not why my father, instead of auguring from it that I was born to follow in his footsteps, deprived himself once more of the aid of my youthful talent, and sent me to the Jesuit College, where I was recommended by a M. Lefebure. It is true that this recommendation went so far as to include the price of the *pension*.

CHAPTER II

DUBOIS WITH THE JESUITS—HE DOES NOT COMMUNICATE—THE CARNAVAL—DUBOIS SCARAMOUCH—DUBOIS TONSURED—HE LEAVES BRIVES-LA-GAILLARDE — PORTRAIT OF DUBOIS—M. DE GOURGUES, PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF BORDEAUX—DUBOIS PRECEPTOR—MADEMOISELLE PIERRETTE — DUBOIS MARRIED — DELIVERANCE OF PIERRETTE — THE SECOND FATHER—DEPARTURE FOR PARIS

At college, where I remained four years, I acquired the few vices which I still lacked. In revenge, I learned a few scraps of Latin, which the good Jesuit fathers engraved on my memory by means of the birch-rod. I proved to them, at the time of the Contract, that I was not ungrateful.

In spite of my indolence and bad examples, it was to my own quickness that I owed the instruction I derived from books. Thus I made little of the "Greek roots" of Port-Royal, and I studied history with an aptitude beyond my years. The *Prince* of Machiavelli, translated by Amelot de la Houssaie, pleased me mightily, and I am sure that I derived from it excellent principles of policy. The Jesuits know admirably how to recruit proselytes for their order, all the members of which are distinguished for their knowledge or ability. It seems that I possessed the qualities out of which a good Jesuit is made, for they spared neither exhortations nor stratagems to enlist me in the company. I held out stoutly, and I applaud myself for not having yielded to their seductions, which would have, perhaps, made me nothing more than a college rector. 'Tis a goodly post, however, that of Confessor to the King! If the Père La Chaise had possessed any merits beyond his long nose, Heaven knows what would have become of us. However, I made rapid progress also in the vices of a student, and I lied with an imperturbable assurance. I did not know what shame was, and at the time of my first communion I absented myself from the Holy Table in order to rob the cupboard of the reverend fathers; although this did

not hinder me from stoutly maintaining that I had received my Creator. On this account the malicious have treated me as a pagan, doubtless out of Christian charity. One talent upon which I was able, even at that time, to plume myself, was that of reading aloud with rare perfection. I was even appointed reader to the refectory, and I had the time to perfect myself in this rare and difficult art, to which I owe something of my present greatness.

The Carnaval of 1669 I obtained permission to pass with my father. M. Lefebure, whom I visited and thanked for his bounties, supplied me amply with money, and recommended me to be as well behaved as possible. I was careful to promise him this; but there is no folly I did not commit during that pleasant time of masquerade! My honoured father, seeing how great a lad I had grown, almost regretted that he had not made an apothecary of me; but my brother, who was growing in knowledge as I was in perversity, consoled him, promising him a worthy inheritor of his syringe and rights of citizenship. In truth, this dear brother became afterwards privileged apothecary of the Reformed Franciscans of Brives, until I summoned him to me, and created him Superintendent of Roads and Bridges. I may have sometimes repudiated foolish relations; but I have never blushed for my birth. Many great men are not as good as I in this respect. I return to my Carnaval. I procured myself a Scaramouch costume, which mightily became my lively appearance and the vivacity of my remarks. In this costume I frequented the balls and dances. The mask saved me from recognition, and I was all the more audacious on this account. For the rest, the pupil of the Jesuits was entirely unrecognisable; I indulged in women and girls! All over Brives nobody was talked of but the charming Scaramouch, and my first conquest only served to inflate my reputation. I had conceived the idea of being carried to the *fêtes* whither I was invited, in a barrow, and suddenly I sprang into the midst of the assembly with capers and tumbling which won everybody's applause. Luckily my follies did not displease M. Lefebure; but he concluded that I was already too ripe for college, and at the end of the year, having seen me tonsured, he declared that I was in a position to teach others. One of his friends at Bordeaux required a tutor: I set off for that city in order to apply for the post. I left the College and Brives-la-

Gaillarde, having first said farewell to my worthy father, whom I was to see no more, to my mother, who exhorted me to tell my rosary regularly, and my younger brother, who could already distinguish cassia from senna. M. Lefebure always did things in order; he gave me with his letter of recommendation a well-lined purse. I was only fifteen years old, and I seemed to be twenty; moreover, I fulfilled all the conditions of such a travesty: my broad shoulders were not deceptive, and I had the wherewithal to cut a figure in the world, strongly marked features, yet pleasant withal, hazel eyes, fine hair and hands. Whether it was from my confidence in these external advantages, or from my greater confidence in others, which one does not always display, I arrived in Bordeaux as joyously as though I had just received a legacy.

At the risk of letting the place I was about to solicit be obtained by another, I resolved to take advantage of my incognito and see the town a little; but my purse grew visibly thinner, and at the end of four days I was obliged to put the rein on my curiosity. Having put on a clean collar and changed my linen, I repaired to the Président de Gourgues with more assurance than is usual with a place-seeker. My cassock opened every door to me, and I was allowed to present M. Lefebure's letter into the President's own hands. The severe gaze with which he honoured me, when I entered his office, would have disconcerted one less hardy than I was; but I was not even confused at the aspect of so austere a magistrate. The first words he addressed to me were an encouragement which I did not need.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," he said, "pray be seated."

Whilst he was reading the letter of introduction he scrutinised me from out the corner of his eye, and I returned the compliment. He was a big man, dry in appearance, though not in spirit, as I came to know later; his leanness had something venerable about it, and under the crown of his perruque his eyes were as severe as if he had been on the bench; his gestures had something noble in their slowness, but his short, brusque manner of speech announced his frankness and business capacity.

"Monsieur," he said to me, "it is enough that M. Lefebure has sent you here to ensure you my confidence at once; your services are all the more acceptable to me, since my son's tutor has not waited for you, but withdrew yesterday; I beg you then to replace him at once."

"Monsieur le Président," I answered impudently, "I hope to deserve the honour you do me; I have already completed several educations."

"What," replied M. de Gourgues, "M. Lefebure tells me that you have just left the College of Brives!"

"It is true," I answered without hesitating; "and it was at the College that I conducted those educations, which, moreover, brought me more glory than cash."

I was lucky thus to extricate myself from my first falsehood to M. le Président, but I promised to do still better in future. Meanwhile, I was installed, after an agreement had been come to as to my wages, which were to be at the rate of three hundred crowns a year, with my board and lodging. I felt no joy at them, and would fain have a year's salary in advance with the same persons who had so well assisted me to squander the little I possessed. But in my new position, morality formed an indispensable part of the qualities I was warranted to possess; and even though M. de Gourgues kept an actress or two, it was forbidden me to cast a hand, hardly an eye even, on what is called, often so improperly, the fair sex. To pass a night away from the hotel would have meant dismissal; and for a form of recreation I was to take my pupil for a walk round the port; even the duration of our walks abroad was fixed by Madame de Gourgues. I was tempted to turn my attention to this lady, for lack of anything better. I was not alarmed by her thirty-five years; it was of her dignity that I was afraid. I was not vain enough to believe that a little tutor could triumph over the virtue of a Présidente. But the devil is very cunning, woman is very frail, and in affairs of gallantry only the first step is hard.

I have learned since that Madame's tall lackey had been in front of me: I had not, then, to regret a participation. I know not if her son had a more plebeian origin than his father suspected; but the envelope of his mind was so crass, that nothing could penetrate it. I regretted at first, that I should have to teach a brute of this sort, and my Latin—the little I had—was wasted on him. But, as I have said, I was soon consoled: I made better use of my time by studying myself, as a compensation for the slothful ignorance of my pupil, and especially by throwing myself head over ears into a vulgar amour. Madame de Gourgues hated me to the death for it. I dined in the pantry with the

servants, without looking upon it as a dishonour; my self-esteem had its revenge for what was humiliating in the situation: my predecessor had not been any more lordly, and I should have shown an ill grace in wishing for more distinction than M. de Gourgues accorded me. Besides, had I the benefit of a choice? I got on well with my fellow-guests; they treated me with a deference which was offered less to my cloth than my person, and I condescended to elevate to myself a pretty maid, who had caused more than one gallant of the robe or the sword to descend to her: she was a king's morsel.

Mademoiselle Pierrette, who never could abide vulgarity, as she said often at table, repulsed the homage of Lafleur and Labrie; she let herself yield to mine. In truth, she was a woman of too much experience in such dalliance not to dread the results of a complaisance; and I am prone to believe that I was the cause of an inadvertence which produced its fruit after the customary nine months. Pierrette lost flesh by dint of weeping, and her waist grew big in proportion. Two councillors of the Court, a merchant, and three abbés were pointed out, in a whisper, as guilty of the indiscretion. My accursed pupil, sottish as he was by nature, had wit enough, withal, to throw light on my paternity. The little villain ought to be an investigating magistrate some day.

"Mamma," said this urchin, "I think Pierrette is almost as ill as M. d'Ardennes."

This worthy M. d'Ardennes, who was the cause of this vexatious allusion, was a poor dropsical clerk who had to be tapped periodically, every month.

M. and Madame de Gourgues compared their mutual observations.

"Undoubtedly," said Madame de Gourgues, "I should lay myself open to ridicule if I kept this girl in my service."

"You are harder to please than M. l'Abbé Dubois," answered the child, "and I very much doubt if he will be suited so well by another."

These words excited suspicion against me, which my pupil hastened to elucidate. He told naively how of nights I visited the soubrette's chamber without a light or a mantle. It was assuredly not in order to read there. It needed no more to bring my iniquity to light. The Présidente wished to turn me

out-of-doors; the Président changed colour; but, an enemy to scandal, he imagined a more moral if more costly expedient.

On the following day I was summoned to his office, where I repaired more speedily than I should have done if the true reason of this summons had been known to me. M. de Gourgues did not ask me to take a seat, and entered promptly on the subject.

"Dubois, you have got a child. . . ."

"Monsieur le Président," I interrupted, determined to deny everything, "do not make fun of a poor young man who is so obliged to you."

"My lad," he said, "the wisest course for you is to confess, without prevarications, which would be useless this time. The proofs are too patent, and Pierrette is not the only guilty one."

"No more am I," I answered, not thinking to be so near the truth.

"Listen to me, Dubois; reproaches would be useless here, advice would be more to the purpose. You understand that after what has passed you cannot hope to remain in my house; the example would be unprofitable to my son."

"Faith! it would be desirable if a like thing befell him; his intelligence would gain by it. . . ."

"In any case," he continued, with a smile, "that is not amongst your functions as a tutor. But choose, if you please, between leaving by yourself, or with a wife."

"Sooner with the devil, Monsieur le Président."

"You are hard to please, Monsieur l'Abbé, when I consent to furnish the dowry. . . ."

"If you please?"

"A thousand crowns would assure your future; your industry and that of Pierrette would suffice to procure you a competence, which I sincerely wish you."

"Monsieur le Président, at your service; I will wed the thousand crowns."

The scene grew pathetic when Pierrette, all in tears, flung herself into my arms, calling me her dear husband. All the family made a point of congratulating me. The contract was drawn up, and a marriage, in all due form, left me no leisure for reflection. M. de Gourgues counted out the dowry to me, which my eyes devoured, as though it had been a perfect fortune;

he recommended me prudence, industry, economy; and his sermon was barely finished when I hastened to make a hole in this good money which had cost me so little to earn. I left my wife for other women, who were not worth her; she had no more scruples towards myself, and the crowns departed on one side to return on the other. However, we were as good friends as ever.

It was not long after the wedding when Pierrette was delivered, and I found myself the father of a fine child, whose presence attracted a host of presents to the house. It needs not telling that I had thrown my stock to the winds; finding myself in funds, I bade farewell to the condition of tutor, and spent a joyous life betwixt women, wine, and gaming. A good slice of the dowry had already changed hands.

M. le Président summoned me again to him, and said to me with his eternal gravity: "Dubois, if you continue to keep on this fine course I shall expect to see you, within three months, in the hospital."

"Monsieur," I answered insolently, "have you another girl to marry me to? That pays well."

"No; but I wish to rescue an unfortunate man; I have resolved to adopt your son and bring him up as though he were my own."

"So be it, M. le Président, you have my permission to believe it, and I am convinced the dear child will as lief have you for his father as anyone else."

"As for you, Dubois, you have supple wits which should bring you success; I exhort you to repair to Paris with your wife."

"So be it—with my wife."

"In that capital occasions to make your fortune will not be lacking; I have confidence in your cleverness. See, this purse contains eight hundred livres for your travelling expenses; your places have been taken in the public conveyance."

I could see plainly that M. de Gourgues was mightily relieved at my departure and that of Pierrette, whom I found to be informed of everything. Her careless character raised no obstacle to so sudden a departure; it seems that the relations existing between my wife and the Président rendered it indispensable. I resigned myself, and when the babe had been put out to nurse by its second father, M. de Gourgues, Pierrette and myself entered the carriage with all that satisfaction which we

experience in visiting new scenes when no bond of sentiment or interest attaches us to those we are leaving. I will even say to my honour that I did not encroach on the sum which I had obtained from the generosity of my son's father at Bordeaux. I promised myself to spend largely at Paris, where we arrived after being a fortnight on the road. I do not remember precisely whither I went to repose me of my fatigue.

CHAPTER III

THE THORNS OF PARIS—THE ABBÉ BODEAU—DUBOIS AND HIS WIFE SEPARATE — DUBOIS TUTOR TO M. TROTIER DE RIANCÉ — THE COLLEGE OF SAINT-MICHEL — M. FAURE—THE SCHOLARS—DAME FRANÇOISE AND HENRI BOIVIN—THE EVENING STROLLS—DUBOIS TUTOR TO YOUNG MAROY —M. PLUVANT, MASTER OF THE WARDROBE TO MONSIEUR —M. LE DUC DE VENDÔME—THE STOOL: THE BISHOP OF PARMA AND ALBERONI—DUBOIS IN FAVOUR

Ah! how fair Paris seemed to me as long as the dowry of Pierrette lasted. There was no place where I did not find roses to gather in that Paradise of the rich; but, on a sudden, I perceived that there were also thorns; and, unfortunately, the two important things, money and health, failed me at the same moment. I thought then of remembering my wife, whom I had left a widow for two nights out of three; and what would have calmed my marital remorse, if I had had any, was to find her perfectly consoled for my continual absences. On the day after my indisposition, a personage appeared whose name and face were unknown to me: he has since assured me that he had met me elsewhere; I do not contradict him. The Abbé Bodeau (such was his designation in the Court, the town, and everywhere else) bore the title of Canon, and was by trade purveyor of the little establishments of great noblemen. My wife gave me the details of his attributes: as for the man himself, short and fat, prompt to business, gay and smiling ever, he resembled every canon the world over. He knew me, if he had never seen me, for he burst out laughing at sight of my pan of gruel. His merriment was contagious, and I followed his example. The friendly relations which I maintained for several months with this honest huckster favoured those of my wife with the Abbé's clients. I grew quickly accustomed to this idle life, where fortune came to me without my ever taking thought to thank Heaven or my wife: we had nothing to reproach each other on either side, except it

were that I did not live on my savings. The worthy Marquis de Louvois, amongst others, was an ample revenue, and I loved him as a father. Madame Dubois did very wrong in not caring for him; 'tis a grievance I have never pardoned her. I suspected the dear Abbé of having woven the whole intrigue, which seemed to me successful beyond my hopes. What a service he rendered me in disembarrassing me of my wife. Owing to his interested counsels the lusty Louvois had his dismissal, and I had mine.

"My dear," said my wife to me one day, "what course do you intend to take?"

"The best, probably," I answered, "if I have not taken it already."

"Then I shall speak without reserve, and you be pleased to consider now, at any rate, that it is the legitimate wife as well as the true friend who is speaking."

"I have never been such a fop as to consider you as aught else."

"Listen to me, then; I repent, from the bottom of my soul, that I ever made you abandon your cloth and profession of tutor. M. l' Abbé Bodeau thinks that you have mistaken your vocation."

"Is it a monk you would have me be? Well, that might be, if you became a nun!"

"Who knows what I might be, if such were your good pleasure."

"Faith, one would imagine you had asked my advice on everything! I thought we had agreed that we should both go our own way, as each preferred it."

"I desire nothing better; my hand on the bargain! That is why I inform you that from to-morrow you can put your industry to account."

"And what of yours?"

"'Tis no longer adequate to supply you with pocket-money, and I am ashamed of pandering to your bad habits. Adieu! We part as friends."

"Think twice of it; perhaps, when I have become a Cardinal or Prime Minister, you will be sorry for having turned me out of doors."

"You see, you admit you were not made for marriage. Monseigneur, you will not forget me amongst all your honours."

"Only try and preserve your eighteen years until then; you may find a place in my household."

"In the meantime, Monseigneur, mine is no longer open to you."

"It is a long time since it has been open to everybody."

"Remember yourself, Sir; I am no longer your better half."

"No less, no more than before. Good luck, my fair one. When you have children and a fortune, I shall be proud to be their tutor."

Showing no regret at this amicable separation, I embraced my wife most respectfully, with a thousand good wishes for her happiness. The Abbé Bodeau, who was awaiting me at the gate with a beaming countenance, consoled me charitably, and promised me his protection. I left my establishment, carrying but a lean bundle with me; and clothed already in the professional attire, I went to show myself in this costume to certain ladies who gave me asylum until such time as I should have ferretted out a situation. One of these ladies was good enough to interest herself in me; and at her introduction, M. Trotier de Riancé, of the Chamber of Finance, accepted me as tutor to his son. On this occasion I was at the pains to give the lie to the curious recommendation which had done me more service perhaps than one more reputable. It was the only education of which I may be allowed to boast before God and men. My pupil would have done honour to a Port-Royal Jansenist. I remained no less than two years in this house, leading an exemplary life as far as words were concerned, to the parents' edification. The young man who had been confided to my care, of a shy and gentle nature, obeyed my moral lessons so well that the father was obliged to begin to moderate my zealous ardour. The mother spoke of me always as "the Holy Man"; and my hypocrisy amused me as a comedy in which I won applause as author and actor as well, not to mention the receipts, which buoyed up my courage. However, I had not renounced my old affections; and as my conduct was in no wise under supervision, I went to church by no means so often as I gave out. This lasted until my pupil's father happed upon me in mighty bad company, whither he had not come, apparently, in search of me. He said nothing of his thought; but shortly afterwards, on the pretext that I had nothing more to teach his son, dismissed me with a rich present. We parted good friends, tacitly promising each other secrecy as to the nature of our common acquaintances.

Madame de Riancé, an old and pious coquette, bade me adieu with tears, in a manner liable to give me a false impression of her.

She it was who placed me with the Président de Gourgues, a brother of the Président of Bordeaux, to whom my wife, my son, and myself all owed so much. This Président had the vices of the family: a joyous libertine and no Tartuffe, he did not make himself out better than he really was; and from the moment that he discovered me I became his confidant and accomplice. My company pleased him also, and he found it indispensable on his gallant expeditions. He robbed his son of my lessons; and the language which I employed with him proves that Latin is not the only one which outrages modesty by its words. Oaths were no more than accessory ornaments which I have ever since retained. Fifteen years of widowhood was M. de Gourgues' excuse for his dissipated conduct, and my gentlemen of the Parliament were Catos of his own kidney. I was no better off with my pupil than in my previous experiences. I wasted my time and trouble in teaching a little unlicked cub. The Président consoled me for the tedium of this employment; and he would have been the most amiable of men if his joyous philosophy had known how to preserve itself from the influence of prejudice. I thought it useless to enter with him into the details of my private life; and his discretion on this matter caused me to suspect that he knew more of the subject than I should have wished to tell him. I was mistaken. M. de Gourgues, writing to his brother at Bordeaux, was tactless enough to speak of me, and the reply which he received brought an interruption to our friendship: he dreaded ridicule and scandal, and with incredible weakness determined no longer to have me in his house. I will wager that he has often regretted this. He called me one day into the garden and showed me the letter, in which there was a full chronicle of my achievements and marriage, with only certain reticences regarding the birth of my son.

"Well! What have you to reply to that, my boy?" said the Président.

"Anything I choose—begging your pardon," said I.

"You understand that I am no more likely to believe it; but—in short, you are married, and you wear a stock. . . ."

"Ah! Monsieur, that proves to you that I have become once

more what I was before I took a wife: mine is dead, thank God!"

M. de Gourgues sighed at these words in a manner which gave me to understand that he viewed widowhood in no darker colours than myself.

Unluckily, such is the result of prejudices, that from that moment my credit was gone with him. To keep me was, in his eyes, to become a participator in the bad reputation given to me by his beloved brother. Meanwhile, he wrote again to the latter, who sent him back such highly-coloured portraits of me, the whole commentated on by his wife, that M. de Gourgues had no resource but to beg me, much against his heart, to seek a house where my prowess was unknown. I was afraid the accursed Président would put a seal on his persecutions by forwarding me my son, whom I had so disinterestedly given him; but he looked upon him as his own property. M. de Gourgues did not let me go with empty hands, and urged me to come and visit him as a friend. I did not fail him, and many a fine gathering I remember in his house at Aunay. I must confess that my pupil changed subsequently to his advantage; and, as though his father had been his teacher, became a free liver and, almost, a man of wit. Finding myself without a place and with a certain amount of money, I conceived the fantasy of completing my education, which had always remained imperfect. I felt an ambition to instruct myself, which was similar to that of advancing on the career of fortune. In my pretty zeal, I stooped in order to be more sure of rising. I entered the College of Saint-Michel or Pompadour; and M. Faure, Doctor of the Sorbonne, the Principal of this College, who had been tutor of M. Letellier, Archbishop of Rheims, took me into his private service. I attached myself not so much to the man as to the place, and laboured rather for the future than the present. M. Faure was a real Sorbonnian doctor, but of a choleric temper. I, who had never known what gentleness and patience meant, was firm in my replies with voice and gesture; whence interminable discussions which did not proceed by *ergo* and *utrum*; the Sorbonne lost its rights, and each of us swore by God and Devil. Meantime, my finances were at the ebb; I did not refuse a purse which was vacant at the college. The secretary became the scholar, and thenceforth I consorted no more with the Principal. My irascible humour

vented itself on my comrades. It was necessary to renounce the indolent habits contracted by me in my apprenticeship as a tutor. I made such progress as my pupils had never done beneath my rod: rising early and going to rest late, poring over Greek and Latin, I bore it all with devotion. Now I have cause to be proud; for behold me, in short, the son of my works. I saw but rarely the rubicund countenance of M. Faure. I had tumbled into the midst of the purse-holders, a crass and prejudiced set. Their idleness, ignorance, and pride excited my pity, and I struck up a friendship, in preference, with our cook, old Françoise, and Henri Boivin, our porter, the natural brother of the scientist, Jean Boivin, who is still alive. Dame Françoise, a beauty of fifty, of a plumpness which was an excellent imitation of freshness, was still a dainty enough morsel for famished schoolboys, but resisted the gallants with more perseverance than I had thought her capable of; and the porter alone shared with me the good lady's favours. As we all dined together, the purse-holders, turn by turn, did the honours of this male seraglio. Françoise only threw the handkerchief to her two faithful adorers, who, at table, had always the best and biggest pieces. We excited much envy, and Boivin, a tailor by trade, saw the number of his enemies increase, and that of his customers diminish. He was a good rogue of a tailor, and I have not forgotten him in my prosperity: he still wears my livery, and I sometimes visit the shop which he has established in the Rue Saint Honoré.

Thus we lived like brothers and sisters, Henri, Françoise, and I; all things were in common between us; and a purse-holder having tried to violate our Hélène, I brought the strength of my twenty-two years to bear on him. We fought like two knights of the Round Table, in presence of the purse-holders, who adjudged me victor. Françoise loved me all the more for it.

It was at this school that I acquired those excellent economical principles which have meant an income of two hundred thousand livres, and which have been often treated as avarice. For the rest, the name has nothing to do with the matter; I have always found it answer. I do not blush now to admit that I have cleaned my boots with my own spittle; I have reason then to be indignant when my nephews are prodigal and fling money out of the window. My nephews will never make the career that I have made.

Life at college has but meagre distractions, and I thought, not without regret, of the pleasures I had tasted, in a manner so piquant too. On fine summer evenings Henri took one of Françoise's arms, I accommodated myself with the other, and we made our promenade along the Quai de la Tournelle to the corner of the Ile Saint-Louis. This recreation was prolonged until sunset.

M. de Gourgues, astonished at my silence, wrote to me, urging me to spend three days at his house at Aunay, promising me good cheer and a good bed. I understood that it was a question of my being unfaithful to Dame Françoise, and I repaired to the principal.

"Well, scapegrace," he cried to me, when I entered, "I have heard about the pretty life you lead . . . "

"Monsieur," I answered, without giving him time to finish, "give me, if you please, a permission of three days to visit M. le Président de Gourgues."

"Go to the devil, if he will have you."

"I shall be careful not to ask him; he might take me at my word."

"Don't be afraid, it's all arranged. I don't want to know where you are going; those three days will lay more than three mortal sins on your conscience."

"You are very courteous; I am your humble servant."

"I know that, rascal; you could not say a truer word."

At these words I turned round, a flush on my forehead, rage in my heart.

"You make a mistake, M. Faure," I said, emphasising each word; "and to give you a proof of it, I shall give myself, on my own authority, a permission of more than three days."

"For ever, if it suits you."

"The devil take me! You can have back your purse of a hundred and twenty livres; I will never set foot again in your antechamber, and I wish you plenty more servants like me."

"That I do not, I swear to you; I am glad to be rid of such a pedant as yourself."

"And I of such a pedant as you."

I went to pack my baggage, which was no heavier than when I entered Saint-Michel: I embraced Henri and Françoise with tears in my eyes, and turned out of the Rue de Bièvre, cursing the day when I had first set foot in it.

M. de Gourgues congratulated me on the resolution I had come to in leaving the slavery of college, and offered me an education to conduct, which I accepted with gratitude. I returned to Paris, where I was installed as tutor with a merchant of the Petit-Pont, named Maroy.

"Monsieur," said Maroy, delighted with the Président's recommendation, "there is no sacrifice I would not make in order to bring up my only son, and I will grudge no money to a man as able as yourself."

This flattering beginning gave me a better opinion both of myself and the merchant than I had before, and I promised to carry out all his wishes.

"My son," he went on, "has need of a strong will to tame him: he has a character so brutal that I, who am so gentle, cannot imagine how I can have begot a child so little resembling me. It is not easy to master him; he cries, foams at the mouth, struggles; he beats everybody, and respects no one, not even his father."

This preamble would have been like to frighten a tutor in his apprenticeship, but I was tempted to see which was the greater devil of us two. The youthful Maroy made a point of justifying his father's panegyric in all points. He had already driven to distraction five or six masters, and these precedents encouraged him to treat me with as scant ceremony as the others. He commenced at the point where he had finished with my predecessors; but I paid him back in his own coin. When he saw that I cried out louder than himself, was as quick to raise my hand as he was, he reflected seriously as to correcting himself, and his outbreaks gave way before my own. In short, I was able to win a mastery over his mind, which has gone on increasing, since, in the issue, he became my confidential messenger.

The three years which I consecrated to making a lamb of this little Maroy, form the most insignificant part of my life. I do not regret them otherwise, because I must take into consideration the joyous moments that I procured without undoing my purse-strings. It was a valet of Monsieur, named Aquin, who gave me the recipe as to how to obtain gratis that which is everywhere sold. It is called paying with one's person; one's appearance has much to do with it, and words are equivalent to actions; however, I did not confine myself to words. I enjoyed reputation and

favour in my little world, just as M. de Soyecourt at Versailles. I pass over in silence a number of honourable acquaintances which made me the fashion in the mercantile world. Madame Maroy and others swore only by the Abbé. As for me, I swore in God's name, as moderately as possible, that I might not lose the old habit.

I passed into another house, still not despairing of being able to raise myself out of the narrow sphere of the professor. I changed my conduct in changing my pupil. The Marquis de Pluvant, master of the wardrobe of Monsieur,* impressed with my deserts, from having heard me spoken of at Maroy's, who was one of his tradesmen, confided his son to me, a big lad of fifteen, a sort of miniature of the vices and absurdities of people of quality. I took little trouble about him, and let him continue in the slough of his nullity and self-importance. I never missed an opportunity of casting light on the talents and wit which he did not possess; part of my praise returned to me by right, and I used it to increase the esteem with which they had thought fit to gratify me. I insinuated myself by degrees into the friendship of M. de Pluvant, a petty bourgeois who had been ennobled, and whose whole pride was centred in his particle and his charge of the wardrobe of a Prince of the Blood. He had had a genealogy fabricated, the origin of which he was in a hurry to forget.

M. de Pluvant was welcome in the house of M. le Duc de Vendôme, grandson of Henri IV., whose noble qualities, if not his love of women, he possessed. Moreover the Duc—brave, benevolent, knowing neither hate, nor envy, nor revenge—prided himself on his readiness to render a service. The King's brother dubbed him "a good fellow of a Prince." His faults were not those of his rank. Stories are told of his uncleanliness which caused the stomach to rise, and his person bore witness to all that can be said on this subject; his laziness passed into a proverb even; for he would not rarely remain a whole week in bed, on the simple pretext that he was undressed all ready for the night. Finally his disinterestedness was carried to the point of utter negligence, and I have known him to be penniless, without his perceiving that he lacked what was necessary. He shared with Monsieur the singular eccentricity of never giving audience except

* *Monsieur* was the invariable title of the brother of the King of France.

when upon his stool. I remember, in this relation, an incident which took place at the time of his commanding the army in Italy. The Bishop of Parma, being sent by the Duke, his master, to treat with him, was introduced, with a great following of clergy, when M. de Vendôme was sitting on this throne. The Bishop was polite enough not to hold his nose when he perceived what the General was doing. A chair of a different kind was given to the Bishop, who commenced a desultory conversation to cover his displeasure.

"Monsieur le Duc," he said, amongst other remarks, "it seems to me, from your face, that you are feverish; the air of this country does not suit you."

"You have only seen my face," replied M. de Vendôme, showing his posterior to the Bishop, who rose in the utmost confusion.

"I am not fit to treat with you, M. le Duc," he said, preparing to go; "I will send you my chaplain, whose manners more resemble your own."

He despatched him Alberoni, who became, like myself, Cardinal and Minister.

This ambassador appeared before M. de Vendôme, at the moment when the latter was rising from his stool. *Ah! culo di angelo!* cried the Italian, falling on his knees as though before a Madonna. M. de Vendôme, charmed at his appreciation, kept him with him, and made a favourite of him.

M. de Pluvant, who had the honour of being admitted to the Prince during these singular audiences, whenever the duties of his post did not detain him with Monsieur, enjoyed a credit which was the measure of his punctuality. M. de Vendôme liked his conversation, habitually analagous to the nature of the séance; he listened to him, did not answer, laughed sometimes, and was altogether at his ease. Now it happened that this worthy Prince, having heard some of my sallies quoted by his Achates, expressed a wish to know me, and M. de Pluvant conceived a jealousy of me, owing to the entry of the wardrobe being permitted me.

CHAPTER IV

A PROPHECY—THE AUDIENCES OF M. DE VENDÔME—M. NASLIN, HIS ALMONER—MONSIEUR, THE DUC D'ORLEANS—DUBOIS IN THE ANTECHAMBER—MADAME DE GRANCEY, THE MISTRESS OF MONSIEUR—THE MORNING VISIT AND THE PINCH OF SNUFF—THE RENDEZVOUS—FAREWELL TO M. DE VENDÔME—THE PRESENTATION—M. DE SAINT-LAURENT—DUBOIS ENTERS AS A FUNCTIONARY AT THE PALAIS-ROYAL—THE PUPIL—THE FIRST FLATTERY

THE first time I appeared before M. Faure, my wide-awake expression, my lips pinched into a sardonic smile, my cunning eyes, and I know not what indefinable quality shed over all my person, had revealed to the Principal the rapid road I was one day to tread; he scrutinised me from top to toe, and cried with an inspiration: "That little villain will be somebody." This premonition, which was realised, had struck me profoundly, and from emulation I had complete faith in it. Hence the perseverance I brought with me to the pursuit of honours and fortune, and now that I have arrived at accomplishment, I know not even yet if I ought to pause. But alas! I commenced the story of my youth with a confession of my infirmities: there is a term to all things; I shall not have the time to become Pope. I remembered the horoscope which M. Faure had drawn for me, when I repaired to M. de Vendôme, who received me without ceremony, as he did everyone. Moreover, one had to know the nature of the seat the Prince occupied to notice it; art having perfectly disguised to the eyes the form of that piece of furniture so indispensable to his constitution. I myself, who have, for several months, assisted daily at his audiences, can say on oath, that they were inoffensive to the nostrils and most decorous. M. de Pluvant, who had fully informed me, was my introducer to the god, who did not rise on my entry. This time etiquette was urgent. He made us be seated on each side of him, and spoke as freely as if he had nothing else to think about.

"My friend," he said, "this good Pluvant has often praised your wit, and I am quite prepared to believe in it."

"Monsieur le Duc," I replied, with a courtier's subtlety, "I am afraid of being unable to do justice to the favourable opinion you have of my wit: if it were a question of my attachment and devotion, I should have less difficulty in producing my proofs."

"Pray do so, my dear Dubois."

"Monseigneur, allow me to tell you as much."

My boldness succeeded better than I could have hoped, and a hearty peal of laughter counselled me to dare all. The interview progressed with a rapid bandying of sallies and verbal quips; I had no trouble in convincing the Prince that I even surpassed my reputation.

"With all this fine doctrine," he asked me, laughing, "are you not a tutor by profession?"

"What matters my fashion of thought, Monseigneur? I have always one according to circumstances, and am of opinion that one should talk reason to sages and laugh with fools. . . . However, I will not conclude from that that I should imitate you on this occasion; I am too conscious of the distance which exists between a Prince of the Blood and me."

With these words I drew back my chair, and the Duc, attributing to the incongruous nature of his own this retreat on my part, redoubled in gaiety. It seems that he flourished on this treatment; for on the morrow he summoned me at the same hour, and to the same place, and thenceforth I went every day to keep him company, without his ever thinking to reward my assiduity. Lord knows all the fine tales and falsehoods I dealt out to him as aperients; and M. de Pluvant, jealous of the favour I enjoyed, to his detriment, often complained to me that I was seeking to supplant him. He ended by dismissing me, and I found myself without a place, and with but meagre resources. The only advantage I had reaped from my presentation to the wardrobe of M. de Vendôme was the acquaintance of sundry titled personages, who called me the *Abbé*, quite short, and were pleased to laugh at my pasquinades. None of them, however, had offered me his protection. I reminded myself in time of the evangelical precept: *petite et accipietis;* ask and ye shall receive.

Among the persons who wished me well was M. Raslin,

almoner of M. de Vendôme, more man of the world than priest, with good-nature written on his features, as health was on his fat belly. He began by pretending to an alliance, by the left hand or the right, with the family of the Mortemarts, on whom Madame de Montespan had attracted the King's favours; but when the star of this mistress paled before that of Madame de Maintenon, he disembarrassed himself, little by little, of the relationship, and finished by swearing that he had not a drop of Mortemart blood in his veins. This little fantasy excepted, M. Raslin was a most estimable man, who devoted his revenues of twenty thousand livres to Satan, his pomps and works, rather than to the Church; a mighty egoist and a consummate courtier. Seeing me so correct in my simplicity, and so jovial in my conversation, he had no suspicion that my fare was meagre, and that I often found myself hard put for a dinner.

One day, when I was assisting with him at the audience of M. de Vendôme, I took a firm resolution to issue from my slough.

"Monseigneur," I said, "would you be able to find me a pupil?"

"Is the education of the little Pluvant finished then? His father, so it seems, is not enchanted with you."

"On the contrary, it is I who am not with him; he pays me too modestly; for I am not humble enough to value myself at three hundred crowns a year: a common schoolmaster would not be found for that price."

"Certainly, Monsieur Dubois," said the Abbé Raslin, "I know nothing of your morals; but I look upon you as a learned man: one can see that you have passed through the hands of the Jesuit fathers."

"Forgive me, my poor Dubois," cried the Duc. "I thought you were good at the most to teach jackdaws and parrots."

"Remember," I interrupted, "the Constable de Luynes began no differently. Genius consists in seizing the opportune moment."

"*Ventre Saint gris!* as my grandfather said," added M. de Vendôme, "you are right. And your request would be worse received if I were in different state of health."

"Ah, Monseigneur," I answered, "how happy I am that the stool influences you in my favour."

"Raslin," said he, "I recommend you this joker, and beg you to exert yourself warmly in placing him as he deserves."

"Beware, Monseigneur," said I, "there is no bishopric vacant."

"On the contrary," replied M. de Vendôme, "that of Charenton."

Monsieur, the King's brother, was announced; the almoner and I rose to leave. The Duc, without changing his posture, said to the Prince: "Monsieur d'Orléans, here is a scapegrace named Dubois, who has the demon's own wit and cunning, and who wishes for a tutorship."

"Let him see the sub-governor of the Duc de Chartres," replied Monsieur; "they will find some place for him."

Monsieur resembled the King his brother, the most handsome man of his time, in no respect whatever. He was of small stature, without the least distinction in his appearance or manners; his hair and eyebrows accentuated the pallor of his long, narrow face; his dark and wide open eyes accorded ill with a small mouth garnished with hideous teeth; he paid all the minute attentions of a woman to his toilette and his pleasures: his good qualities, however, always gave umbrage to Louis XIV.

Monsieur had certainly come on business connected with gaming, a ball, or a masquerade, for he asked me no questions, as was his general habit, and I withdrew to the antechamber with the almoner, who clapped my shoulder, saying, "Comrade, you have one foot in the stirrup. . . ."

"Unluckily I am not yet in the saddle."

"Wait here until His Highness comes out. I shall be much mistaken if he does not speak to you."

Indeed, as he crossed the antechamber, the Prince approached me with an affable air: "Are you a Jansenist?"

"Heaven forbid, Monseigneur!"

"You are not married?"

"I have never been married."

"What is your name?"

"Dubois, Monseigneur."

"Do you happen to be a relation of my valet, who bears the same name as you?"

"Perhaps, Monseigneur."

"On what side?"

"On the side of Adam, apparently."

"Are you fond of chimes?"

"Monseigneur! . . ."

"You are not fond of chimes?"

"I did not say that."

"Will you go from me to M. de Saint-Laurent?"

"With the most profound gratitude, Monseigneur."

Thereupon, he turned his back on me, saying to the Chevalier de Lorraine, who accompanied him: "Philippe, I am in low spirits to-day; to restore myself I am going to hear the chimes of the Samaritaine."

M. Raslin congratulated me on not having undergone a longer cross-examination, which might have become embarrassing to a less skilled liar. He advised me to lose no time before making use of Monsieur's recommendation; and, as he found me of a like opinion, he proposed that we should go together to see M. de Saint-Laurent, whom he knew of old. I accepted his obliging offer, and on the way he related to me a story of the strange reception which Monsieur (nicknamed the *Enquirer*) had given to a person whom he did not know; it was a *protégé* of his mistress, La Grancey:

"I presume," the Prince said to him, "you come from the army?"

"No, Monseigneur," replied the other, "I have never been to the war."

"Do you come then from your country house?"

"No, Monseigneur, I have not got one."

"You live in the provinces, no doubt?"

"No, Monseigneur, I have never left Paris."

"As that is so, you live, I suppose, with your family?"

"No, Monseigneur, I have no relations."

Monsieur was disconcerted, gave a laugh, and withdrew.

We arrived at the Palais-Royal; but, as Raslin had feared, M. de Saint-Laurent was occupied with the young duke. We kicked our heels there until they came to inform the almoner that the sub-governor was visible to him alone. I understood that my presence would have rendered the interview awkward, and trusting to the dear Abbé's friendship, I tried to put a face upon it before the lackeys, who were eyeing me with disdainful glances. "Rascals!" said I to myself, "you shall change your tone if ever I become anything in the palace." At the end of

a quarter of an hour M. Raslin returned to me; his air of dissatisfaction foreboded no good tidings: he waited until we were in the street to satisfy my impatience.

"Well!" said I, "you have seen M. de Saint-Laurent? What am I to hope?"

"I don't know; but I think success will be difficult unless you are provided with the recommendation of Madame de Grancey."

"What? Is the Duc de Chartres still in petticoat strings?"

"You may understand me as it seems good to you; but this is the fact: M. de Saint-Laurent, whom I found very sick with the gout, told me that he would do all that in him lay to be agreeable to M. le Duc de Vendôme. But he let me guess that Madame de Grancey continued to enjoy great influence in the Palais-Royal, and that a word from her mouth would work marvels in your favour."

"Did you lay enough stress on the promise Monsieur condescended to make me?"

"I did not fail to; but it seems that Madame de Grancey, with whom His Highness was greatly in love, retains the privilege of appointing to all the places in his household; between ourselves, I imagine it is her interest to do so."

"I don't see what sop I can throw to her; I will reflect, however. But is there any office vacant which might suit me?"

"Certainly. M. le Saulnier, formerly Principal of the College of Treasurers, who taught the Prince grammar, died last week. . . ."

"Faith! he has done well, and I am infinitely obliged to him. I will be grammarian in despite of envy."

I obtained information about Madame de Grancey, which enabled me to ensure a good reception from her. M. de Vendôme sang me a goodly number of couplets composed on her gallantries, her amours with Monsieur, and her bad habits. "She has never done anything," he said to me, "but gamble with her lovers up till five or six of a morning, regale herself, smoke tobacco, and the rest." This *rest* would have been perfectly convenient for my tastes and requirements, but the competition was not permitted me. However, my imagination came to my aid, and on the following day, elegantly attired and scented, I repaired to the Palais-Royal, where this lady was lodged, on the same floor with Monsieur. The name

of the Duc de Vendôme, which I flung at the lackeys' heads, soon franked me past the door. I was introduced into the sleeping-chamber of Madame de Grancey, who was still in bed. I indulged in salutations to the very ground. I noticed that the lady was prying at a little sealed parcel that I carried under my arm: she was trying to guess what I had brought.

"Monsieur," she said, "is, perhaps, the person who is seeking the place of house-steward?"

"It is not I, Madame. . . ."

"No doubt you have come after the post of porter?"

"Just as little, Madame. M. le Saulnier. . . ."

"I understand; you are a tutor, a reader; one may be able to arrange with you."

"My unworthy deserts would be but a poor augury of success, Madame, did I not hope for your good offices."

"Explain yourself, my good friend."

"I know, Madame, that you have the ear of Monsieur."

"You may take it so."

"I believe I am capable of filling the honourable post which I solicit near the person of His Highness, the Duc de Chartres. M. de Vendôme, who has interested himself in me, has deigned to present me to His Royal Highness, Monsieur; M. de Saint-Laurent only awaits your assent. . . ."

"As I told you, I see no obstacle. What is it you have there?"

"The same snuff which is used by the King of England."

"Snuff? For me?"

"Nay, Madame; but I thought that M. de Contade. . . ."

"It is true Contade loves good snuff. O, the exquisite perfume! It must be delicious; indeed, it is most excellent!"

Madame de Grancey yielded to the temptation; and from the huge pinches with which she powdered her nose, I saw plainly that my suit was gained. This lady, whose folly was almost as great as her beauty, caused me certain distractions which drew my attention from the object of my visit; the disorder of her toilette was not foreign to this; she perceived my emotion, and smiled, asking me my name. A woman is always sensible of the sentiment which she inspires. She told me to count upon her, and to procure for M. de Contade some more of that excellent tobacco which she liked so much.

Madame de Grancey did not forget me; for the next day I

received my commission to replace the late M. Le Saulnier, and a note from my patroness, for which I thanked my good looks. It was a sort of rendezvous, its pretext being to instruct me in my duties, and fix a day for my presentation to M. de Saint-Laurent. I went to the place indicated, and convinced myself that Madame de Grancey reaped profit, either in money or nature, from the power which she exercised in the Palais-Royal. I was doubly protected, and I proved the falsity of the rumours which Madame de Bouillon and the Marquise d'Alluye had spread at Court as to the health of this lady. Thus it was that I signalised my entry into the great world; I did not renounce, however, bourgeois and vulgar amours.

M. de Vendôme heard of my nomination with pleasure; and although he entertained some doubts of my morality, he congratulated me with his military frankness.

"Dubois," he said to me, "there is no question here of bringing up some little tradesman; you are about to become responsible for the education of a Prince; walk straight if you wish to make your way."

"Monseigneur," I replied, "I have a sure foot and a good eye, and I shall not make a false step unless I intend to do so. Moreover, I do not think to stop at the beginning; I feel more stuff in me than goes to the making of a mere tutor."

He promised to recommend me warmly to Monsieur, who had spoken to him of me the night before, and of my fine teeth; he smiled at this characteristic detail. The Abbé Raslin, astonished that a poor devil of my description should have moved the avarice of the Grancey, displayed lively satisfaction at my success. He offered to present me to Madame Charlotte d'Orléans, on whose German roughness he expatiated to me. She was a mere nonentity in her husband's household, where she was left to write unceasingly interminable letters to her thousand and one relations. The King, however, whom her original remarks amused, showed much deference and friendship towards her; she did not lack resources to be useful to the persons whom she liked, and the Abbé Raslin, assiduous in paying his court to her, owed her the fat revenues which he accumulated without accusing himself of simony. Blessed are the humble of spirit, says the Gospel. As for me, I adopt the reverse of the proverb.

It was on the 1st February 1685 that my presentation to M. de

Saint-Laurent occurred; and he, in his turn, presented me to his pupil. Madame de Grancey was anxious to conduct me to him herself. She was superbly adorned: I saw her for the first time in the full light of day. I noticed from her face, plastered with rouge and powder, that she was no longer in her springtime; none the less, I did not repent me of what I had done for her, remembering what she had done for me. We entered the closet of M. de Saint-Laurent, who, in spite of his infirmities, rose to meet her, taking no notice of me. I augured ill from the fellow's haughtiness. A singular face he had for a sub-governor! A complexion at once bilious and pimply, a nose disproportionately long, a mouth gaping from ear to ear, little eyes one had to guess at in the uncouth face. The big head on the little body produced an effect so comical, that the Duc de Chartres, who had been placed in the hands of this hideous pedagogue at the age of six, could never behold him without bursting into laughter. Add to these fine physical qualities a vanity, a pedantry, and an ignorance that could not be surpassed.

"Monsieur de Saint-Laurent," said Madame de Grancey to this repulsive sight, "I have just come to hand over to you this young man, with whom you will be as pleased as myself."

"What can this great fellow do, Madame?"

"Faith, Monsieur—anything. . . . However, you will judge of him yourself."

"He is very young," resumed the old ape, staring at me with a suspicious air.

"Monsieur," said I, most politely, "I had thought my thirty years put me out of reach of such a reproach; notwithstanding, if you prefer me to put on a few years, I willingly agree, and will go on adding them, so long as it pleases you, until they carry me inclusively to the grave."

"Pooh, young man!" cried he, "you are witty, I am sorry for you; you will never be sub-governor. Pray do not spoil our pupil, who is already too much inclined towards such puerile playing with words."

"Don't frighten my *protégé*," replied Madame de Grancey, "nor make it a reproach to him that he talks as other men write; I am certain that you will get more out of him than you think. He has powerful protectors, and I beg you to show him a good countenance with the Prince; it is I whom you will oblige."

Madame de Grancey threw a glance of intelligence at me, and left us, after having repeated her advice to me to be prudent. I had already my plan of conduct formed. I had divined the stupidity of the sub-governor from his outer man; and thenceforth, I looked upon his place as belonging to me by right.

"Monsieur," he said to me, when we were alone, "it seems that Madame de Grancey does not protect you without a motive."

"Of what motive do you speak, Monsieur?"

"I mean to say that you are a relation or a friend."

"Neither, to my regret, for if that were so I should not start with a post worth only fifteen hundred livres."

"At your age I had not as much; but I am afraid that you will be compelled to be contented with it, for Messieurs d'Estrades, Renaudot, and myself are charged with all that relates to the education of the Prince."

"I am quite aware that M. le Comte d'Estrades is His Highness's governor; you are his sub-governor, Monsieur. As to M. Renaudot, he is attached to you, as I am, in the quality of deputy, when you are indisposed and not in a state to continue your lessons."

"You are well informed, Monsieur; but I will instruct you in your duties; I count on your zeal. They have spoken to me with praise of your talent for reading aloud. I am delighted to be able to utilise it; we require a person who can read for two or three hours on end, and the *valet-de-chambre*, whom I employed, did not come up to my requirements."

"My functions then will be confined to those of a reader?"

"That is not all; you will be my assistant, and will prepare the lessons. This task will be beyond your strength; but you have to guide you the advice of the wisest men, of Messieurs La Fontaine, Maucroix, and Faure."

"I shall not be in the proximity of the Prince, then?"

"For what good; am I not there? You will make extracts from the Universal History, the History of the Church, the Acts of the Martyrs, and selections from the best modern French poets; the rest concerns me."

"That is to say, you retain all relations with M. le Duc de Chartres?"

"My friend, I fathom your thought; but I warn you all

the places are filled, and the wisest course is to content your self with that you have."

"Monsieur, will you be pleased to point out to me where I am lodged?"

"You will be conducted presently to your room, where all the necessary books await you. Start on your functions immediately."

Monsieur arrived at this moment, and said to me with a smile: "So here you are installed, my friend; forget the wicked stories you told my cousin, M. de Vendôme. Madame de Grancey has spoken well of you to me; I recommend you to be careful on the article of religion; my son has excellent principles. . . ."

"He shall never lose them as long as I am alive, Monseigneur," said M. de Saint-Laurent.

"And your gout, my old friend?" continued Monsieur, with his accustomed volubility; "take repose, take care of yourself, and get cured. Adieu; I recommend this jack-priest to you."

M. de Saint-Laurent, who was accustomed to the trivial cackling of Monsieur, resumed our conversation where he had left it, whilst I stood aghast at his strange recommendation.

"One would imagine," he said maliciously, "that you were weak in religion."

"I have quite enough for my needs."

Another door opened, and a young boy ran towards us, and addressing M. de Saint-Laurent, "Monsieur, are we going to Vespers to-day?"

"As your Highness pleases."

"I should be very pleased," replied the Prince. "Tell me, I beg you," he added, "what M. Renaudot means by these words: 'Princes never die.'"

"Did M. Renaudot say that?" asked the sub-governor, with embarrassment.

"Monseigneur," I cried quickly, "it is true that good princes live ever in the memory of their people."

"Who is that gentleman?" asked the Duc de Chartres.

"Monseigneur, the person who takes the place of M. Le Saulnier."

"So much the better," said he, laughing.

CHAPTER V

THE DUC DE CHARTRES — THE PERMISSION — MADAME DE CHOISEUL—THE DUCHESSE D'ORLÉANS—THE CORRESPONDENCE—THE GRANCEY AND THE CHEVALIER DE LORRAINE—THE MARQUIS DE VILLEQUIER AND M. DE HARLAY, ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS—THE FAMILY PORTRAITS—THE SUPPER—THE ABBÉ DE CHAULIEU— THE MARQUIS DE LA FARE—THE SURGEON FELIX—MADAME D'ESPAGNY, MADEMOISELLE CHOUIN AND THE GRAND DAUPHIN

THE young Duc de Chartres, who was not yet ten years old, was as lovely as a Cupid; all the Court ladies admired his pretty white skin, his beautiful chestnut hair, his soft and mischievous eyes, his fresh and lustrous complexion; and to these ladies the face of His Highness lost none of its grace or beauty, since the sun of Italy and Spain tanned it and rendered it more male. The Prince, with his little frame, well made at that time, showed no promise of ever growing tall. In fact, he is not tall now, and his stoutness becomes him amazingly; he does not walk any better at present than he did as a child; this is due to one leg being shorter than the other. As for his sight, it has improved; for, at the age of four, a sort of humour which came from his eyes almost deprived him of it completely; a powder prescribed him by his doctor, M. Gendron, saved him from going blind. He seemed to me of delicate health, but this was fortunately re-established, owing to the good *régime* under which I subsequently put him. In short, M. le Duc de Chartres was a pupil such as I could have wished, docile and ready to receive all impressions. I promised myself, under my breath, from that moment, to set to work as soon as I should have the place of that imbecile M. de Saint-Laurent.

This child, by the very first words he addressed me, told me of the bourgeois education he had received.

"Monsieur," said he, "will you take me to Vespers?"

"As your Highness pleases," I replied; and I prepared to

follow him, groaning secretly at the school of bigotry which was spoiling a prince so happily constituted. I confess, to my shame, I had not set foot in a church for more than five years, and it cost me something to play at piety, good comedian though I am. But M. de Saint-Laurent saved me all remorse by recalling his pupil.

"Monsieur," said he, "you are mistaken as to M. Dubois' post; he is only an assistant I have taken on, a sort of secretary-reader who will be very useful to you; but it is for M. d'Estrades and myself to see you fulfil your religious duties."

"Then," said the little Duke with a vexed air, "I shall not go to Vespers to-day. This gentleman has really got a face which promises well."

"Monseigneur," I answered, with a sweeping curtesy, "my face tells no lies, if it shows you all the attachment I have for you."

"M. de Saint-Laurent," went on the Prince, "see that this gentleman's lessons begin soon; I shall take much interest in them, and I am sure that they will profit me more than those of that poor M. Le Saulnier, who squinted so abominably." He did not suspect, speaking so, that with age the same infirmity would befall himself.

"I beg you, Monseigneur," I continued, in a contrite voice, "to grant me leave of absence for two days, which I desire to pass with some friends to whom I would say good-bye. . . . "

"Really," interrupted the Duc de Chartres, "one would say, that just because you have entered my household, you were going to die or start for the other world. . . . "

"Ah, Monseigneur," I replied, "how can I express to you my gratitude and joy? But I ought to thank my protectors who have made me what I am, M. le Duc de Vendôme, above all. . . . "

"So be it; but if you do not return in two days, I shall know how to torment you."

During this interview, M. de Saint-Laurent bit his lips, and wished me to the devil from the bottom of his heart; he would have liked to know me far enough away. I remained, however; and the Duc de Chartres, with all a child's flippancy, pronounced a few words which seemed to me to augur well for the plan of education I had formed.

"You know," he said to M. de Saint-Laurent, "that pretty Duchesse de Choiseul?"

"I do not understand you," replied the pedagogue.

"What! the niece of Madame de La Vallière, who has such lovely eyes, and who dances so well, from what they say?"

"I do not see, Monsieur, what you would refer to," continued M. de Saint-Laurent.

"They have brought her back to Paris with the small-pox; she would rather die than be disfigured, and she walked about all night in the frost."

"Who gave you these details?"

"Laurent, my *valet-de-chambre*, who had them from M. de Choiseul's people."

I started laughing at this resemblance of names, which was gall to the sub-governor. The latter made a sign to me that I could go; but I did not deem it fitting to profit so quickly by this permission, which had the air of a command.

"Dubois," said the Prince to me, with a laugh, "I have another servant also, who has the same name as you."

"Then you have two, Monseigneur"; and I went out, quite satisfied with my *début*. M. de Saint-Laurent already detested me as a dangerous rival.

I went in search of M. Raslin, who was waiting to conduct me to Madame d' Orléans.

"Well," he cried, as he saw me coming, "is the ship in harbour?"

"At anchor, and shortly to set sail, in all success; the sub-governor hates me already as much as if we had known each other ten years."

"A good sign, my dear Dubois; I dreamt last night that you had mounted in rank, and I believe in dreams as in the Gospel."

We talked long of my presentation and the hopes it held out to me; then we repaired to Madame, who received us after Mass. We found her in her closet, in full ceremonial dress, seated before a table loaded with papers, where she had started writing. This Princess did not strike me as so ugly as I had been told; she was a German beauty, without grace or delicacy, her fresh and ruddy complexion, fat cheeks, buxom figure, and plump arms did honour to her robust health; her eyes were fine enough, and her long, white teeth did not spoil her mouth. In the distance, 'tis true, the red patch where her eyebrows should have been, damaged the general effect of her face. I have since had occasion

to remark her awkward gait, which made her seem deformed. She did not rise at our entry, but went on writing with a rapidity which astonished me.

"M. Raslin," said she, with her Palatine accent, without laying down her pen, "to-day, Thursday, I am corresponding with my aunt, the dear Electress of Hanover; I have only written twelve sheets, and, as there is abundance of news, I think I shall run to thirty."

I knew that Madame devoted each day of the week to a special correspondence. On Sunday, she wrote to Lorraine and Hanover; on Monday, to Savoy and Spain; on Tuesday, to Prussia; on Wednesday, to Modena; on Thursday, to Hanover again; on Friday, once more to Lorraine; and on Saturday she worked off the arrears of the week. I have heard her say: "When, in a day, I have written twenty sheets to the Princess of Wales, ten or twelve to my daughter, twenty to the Queen of Sicily, I feel almost tired out." Louis XIV bantered her on her epistolary outpour. He presented her one day with a list of a hundred horses, killed in her postal service for one year. When one reflects that this epistolary commerce with all the Courts of Europe was continued for more than forty years, one is almost aghast; it needs a woman to accustom herself to such an exercise. I have laughed sometimes when I thought of the fine reputation the good lady must have given me abroad. But I return to our first interview, which did not foreshadow the frank hostility in which we were subsequently to live.

"Madame," said M. Raslin, "I am taking the liberty of presenting to your Royal Highness the tutor whom M. de Saint-Laurent has taken to assist him in the education of Monseigneur the Duc de Chartres."

At these words, she looked at me with a minuteness of attention which I sustained with the utmost effrontery.

"Ah!" said she, "Monsieur is the Dubois of whom someone spoke to me favourably enough; in truth, my friend, your physiognomy doesn't belie the good I have been told of you."

"Madame," I answered, with an address which was natural to me, but which another would have owed to the influence of the air of Court, "I shall have my work cut out to be worthy of the kindness that has been shown to me, but I hope to succeed with God's help and the advice of your Royal Highness."

"I am pleased that you have come," she resumed, observing me the while; "I had just reached you, and I can now trace your portrait after nature."

I posed at my best, whilst the Princess put me questions of every nature, never failing to take down the substance of my replies in writing. I thought myself a personage already; for I did not know that everything went down in this universal correspondence, in which the crudity of the language often surpassed that of the matter. Perhaps I found myself bracketed at hazard between swindlers and women of the town.

"M. Dubois," she said to me again, gravely, when she had finished the passage which related to me, "your salary amounts to fifteen hundred livres, I am told; would you like me to add five hundred from my exchequer?"

"Madame," I cried with an expression of gratitude which was not feigned, "what have I done to merit . . .?"

"Nothing as yet, but you will have to earn this money. You will find yourself, from the nature of your functions, at my son's side almost night and day."

"I am proud of that honour," I replied, guessing in advance what she expected of my complaisance.

"I am often short of details concerning him, and yet the Duc de Chartres ought to figure in all my letters; it is a lacuna to supply, and for that I count upon you."

"Madame, I dare also count upon myself, when it is a question of proving my zeal."

"I beg you then to keep a journal of the tasks and sayings of my son; you will bring it me each week, and the five hundred livres will soon be doubled if I am satisfied with your intelligence."

I accepted with joy the espionage entrusted to me, which could be exploited to the profit of my advancement; for I proposed to make my young Prince speak from time to time in his preceptor's favour. Moreover, had I been a more honest man, the approval of M. Raslin would have silenced my scruples.

A huge packet of news was now brought to the Princess, which told me that I should not be the only employé of Madame's inquisitiveness. She opened it hastily, read it in silence, and cried with a radiant air: "At last, that wretched woman will go!" Then turning towards the almoner: "Raslin, what I

announced to you has happened; the King has considered my complaints against the Grancey; she grows more insolent every day."

I was mighty careful not to defend my protectress, who would have been of no use with the Duchesse d' Orléans.

"Conceive," she said, "that this animal has boasted of having me turned out of my house; she has dared to make a mighty fuss over a pretended *liaison* with Monsieur, who has not his equal in timidity; he is a very Joseph; she needs must have taken him by force then, as she tried to do to her shame. Monsieur himself told me so; and, since the danger he underwent, he refuses to be left alone with the hussy. At last, the amours of the Grancey with the Chevalier de Lorraine have given me a pretext to be avenged on an impudent woman. Here I am informed that the King has bitterly reproached Monsieur with the morals of his household, and begged him to banish the Grancey in order to stop the scandal. On the day I see her go, I will have a *Te Deum* sung."

Madame was induced to read us sundry fragments of these secret notes, which seemed to me to be written by a practised hand. I learnt later that the Marquis de Dangeau and the Duc de Saint-Simon took part in this petty espionage, a branch of which had been confided to me. The Duchesse d' Orléans, with that confidence which resembled indiscretion, read us a selection of anecdotes of the day, which M. Raslin listened to with less astonishment than I should have looked for in an almoner. I recall, amongst others, the following, which was bandied about in every conversation.

M. le Marquis de Villequier had intimate relations with the Duchesse d' Aumont, his step-mother, whilst his wife took her revenge with M. de Harlay, Archbishop of Paris. This Madame de Villequier, who laid out the dead as a penance, recompensed herself for these pious mortifications by denying herself no lover. For some time past she had chosen them in preference from the Church; and the Curé de Saint-Méry, as well as the handsome Prior of Saint-Martin, succeeded, turn in turn, to M. de Harlay. The young Duchesse d' Aumont even surpassed this noble example, and remained in Paris, in order to abandon herself more freely to gallantry; for the old Duke, who had taken her as his second wife, was retained by his service at Versailles. Now, M. de

Villequier, in his frequent expeditions to the Hôtel d' Aumont, became enamoured of a chamber-maid, who could not be more cruel than her mistress. This girl was got with child, dismissed, and revenged herself by providing the Marquis with the means of proving Madame d' Aumont's infidelities. They were with the Archbishop of Paris, who had no more respect for the daughter than the step-mother. M. de Villequier, vexed that such a strange rival should have been selected, and not suspecting that he was doubly his rival, hastened to Versailles to proclaim what he had seen in Madame d' Aumont's bed-chamber; the scandal spread so quickly, that M. de Coulanges made songs out of the adventure. M. le Duc d' Aumont retired to his estates; Madame de Villequier to her oratory; and M. de Harlay, anxious about the consequences of the affair, sought out Madame de Maintenon, in order that she might hush it up, while at the same time he fired a countermine by accusing M. de Villequier of having had an adulterous relation with his step-mother. These accusations laid bare a host of amorous mysteries, at which everybody laughed except the interested parties. The King came in time to check the torrent of truths; he sent for M. de Villequier, and said to him severely: "Monsieur, I recommend you to silence the reports to which you have so imprudently given cause; not only do they nearly touch the honour of the Church, but they cast a serious slur on your own and that of your family; I warn you that, in case this scandal continues, we shall see whether M. de Harlay is as guilty as you say, and if others are not more so than he is. Now you see what you have to do."

M. de Villequier, who was a courtier before everything, did not hesitate, and himself gave the lie to what he had affirmed on oath; he protested that he had been grossly mistaken, made his excuses to M. de Harlay, to Madame d' Aumont, and was equally gracious to his wife; only he never spoke of her, without adding this as a parenthesis: "I, who am not worth an archbishop."

Madame read us with a marvellous *sang-froid* this scandalous chronicle, of which the crudity would have brought a blush to the cheek of anyone save myself. As to the worthy Raslin, he was accustomed to these manners, and took no offence at them whatever. As I was looking at the family portraits with which the walls were lined, Madame interrupted herself to say to me: "Notice, if you please, that I have not got a third of my

ancestors there; which is easy to believe, when you know that the Princes-Palatine yield in nobility to no sovereign in Europe. The king is convinced of this better than anyone; for, on the occasion of my marriage with Monsieur, he thanked me for the honour I did his family."

The sitting had lasted long, and Madame perceived this with a cry of regret.

"Four o'clock," she said, "I shall never finish my letters to-day; I shall have to finish them this evening during the ombre party of Madame la Maréchale de Clerambault. Dubois, I recommend you my news, all that you see, all that you hear; your money is waiting for you."

We left, enchanted with this reception, without stiffness or etiquette.

"Dubois," said M. Raslin to me, "since you stay with us to-day, I wish you to make the acquaintance of the intendant of Messieurs de Vendôme, the Abbé de Chaulieu, who has arrived this morning from the Château d'Anet, with his friend the Marquis of La Fare."

I had not failed to hear of those two amiable poets who imitated Anacreon, at the age of forty-five; although my taste did not lead me to read much verse, I knew many of their prettiest songs by heart. M. de Vendôme had so often praised these two free-livers in my presence, that I was overjoyed to encounter them. The acquaintance was prompt and complete. M. Raslin presented me to M. Chaulieu, who greeted me as a person he had already seen, embraced me warmly, and invited me to a supper at which he was gathering a few friends together to celebrate his arrival. I accepted his invitation, and the almoner required no more pressing than I did. We went together to an ordinary of renown, where we found a numerous and brilliant company.

Our Amphitryon, the Abbé Chaulieu, had one of those open, merry, and beaming countenances, which would give an appetite, if need were, to twenty guests. I admired the majesty of his double chin and his fine hair, which fell in waves upon his shoulders; I could not think that an intendant could thus grow fat, save at his master's expense, and easily persuaded myself, in the intimate company of this epicurean, that with all his voluptuous and gallant affairs, none was dearer to him than that

of the fortune of the Vendômes. He had a foundation of method and cunning which betrayed his Norman origin. However, he has proved, I know not how, that honesty sometimes enriches. The Marquis de La Fare and he revived the ancient friendship of Castor and Pollux; I am afraid, however, that they will not become stars after their death. Mere poets of the dinner table and the pavement have the glory and ephemeral fortune of butterflies; they pass away like the frivolities they have so greatly loved. La Fare had suffered more than his friend from the dissipated life which he led deliberately, being in no more fear of death than I am myself to-day. His hair was beginning to grow thin about his brow, and he said to us, with a smile, that the leaves fall sometimes before winter. He had a noble air, which seduced at once, and his distinguished manners testified to the progress he had made in the school of Hamilton; whatever efforts he made, however, to steel his heart against love and sentiment, Madame de La Sablière always put his philosophy to flight. This tender and delicate sentiment, which he struggled against in vain, gave to his physiognomy and words alike a tinge of melancholy which was also pleasure. The campaigns he went through under the great Condé, whilst marking his courage, did not correct the careless indolence in which his last days were spent. The guests whom the two friends had gathered together were by no means neophytes, and I confess that I was still far from showing a like prowess with the bottle. The end of the orgie, where Venus took the place of Bacchus, permitted me to rehabilitate the reputation of my capacity. The supper, which was prolonged till morning, taught me that great lords were past-masters in debauchery, and compared with them I had the air of a little cit. The celebrated surgeon Félix assisted at the *fête*, and wine compromised in him the gravity of the learned faculty. He related to us the story of his sister, which I will repeat with the dignity of a fasting Cardinal.

"Do you know, gentlemen," he asked us, "the Damozel Chouin, maid of honour to the great Princesse de Conti? Faith, what a maid of honour! She is small, with short legs, which hardly seem to belong to her body; she has a moon face, with twinkling eyes almost in her forehead, a turn-up nose, and a mouth that stretches from ear to ear, set off with the most horrible teeth in the world. I am assured that she is witty, and in truth it would

be but a weak compensation for such physical blemishes. I won't speak to you of her monstrous bosom, which particularly charms Monsieur le Dauphin, not over fastidious in such matters. However, one day when he was at the chase with the Duchesse d'Orléans, in the environs of Fontainebleau, he went to rest in the house of my sister, Madame Desplanes, recently married to M. d'Espagny. My sister is as pretty as the Chouin is hideous, and Monseigneur, to whom all things are good, took a fancy to his charming hostess; he stared at her for an hour, without uttering a word, rapping his shoes with the sheath of his sword. My poor sister, who had never seen a prince of the blood so near her, let herself be dazzled to the point of forgetting her second husband; the first had already been long forgotten. It seems that Monseigneur had no recollection of having been well treated by the maids of honour of Madame la Dauphine; he installed himself for some days with Madame d'Espagny, who did not stint him in hospitality. To reward her, he gave her, without her asking for it, a written promise of marriage, declaring that he would wed her in the event of the deaths of her husband and the Dauphine. Thereupon, he returned to Versailles, to fall once more under the sway of Mademoiselle Chouin. My sister, sighing already for a second widowhood, was not slow to follow the faithless one. It was then she informed me I was all but the brother-in-law of Monseigneur. I told her to act as she liked, but above all not to mix me up in such ridiculous pretensions. In fact, she had several interviews with the Dauphin, who begged her to keep quiet; she made all the more noise, and rushed like a Bacchante to Mademoiselle Chouin, whose intimacy with the Dauphin was known to everyone—he is more debauched than any of us, gentlemen. Now, it's hard enough for two women who are friends to agree; what will be the case with two rivals! Explanations were interrupted by tears, cries, insults, and threats. Mademoiselle Chouin, having touched upon a promise of marriage in her possession, Madame d'Espagny produced her own and waved it victoriously in her rival's face, who seized it and tore it to fragments. Her own face was like to meet with the same fate: my sister threw herself upon the Chouin to tear her to pieces; the Dauphin luckily arrived, and calmed this combat, which his weakness had excited; but fearing a public repetition of it, in the King's presence, he took the side of the lady whose promise of

marriage was intact, and had Madame d' Espagny banished to her husband's family at Soissons! Observe the ingratitude of the great! Wherefore, gentlemen, if you have beautiful and susceptible sisters, I conjure you to bid them beware of princes of the blood, and especially of promises of marriage."

CHAPTER VI

M. DE SAINT-LAURENT'S ILLNESS — THE CAPUCINS OF THE LOUVRE—FAGON, PHYSICIAN TO THE KING—MARIA THERESA OF AUSTRIA—SENSUAL EDUCATION OF THE DUC DE CHARTRES —LA FONTAINE AND DUBOIS—MADAME DE LA VIEUVILLE AND THE DUC DE CHARTRES—DUBOIS IN DANGER OF DISGRACE —THE *CHOUCROUTE* OF THE DUCHESSE D' ORLÉANS—DUBOIS' INDIGESTION—THE CHEVALIER DE LORRAINE—M. THÉVENOT —DUBOIS CHANGES HIS PLAN—THE LESSON AND CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU—DEATH OF M. DE SAINT-LAURENT—RACINE— PRAISE OF DUBOIS

M. DE SAINT-LAURENT having fallen dangerously ill, and being incapable of continuing his lessons, it was necessary, to his great regret, that I should take his place; for he was well aware that I should make no scruple of supplanting him if that were possible. However, I hid my game; I visited him in his bed, implored him to recover quickly, for his health interested us all, and M. le Duc de Chartres would hear of no other teacher save himself. In short, I moved him to tears, and he begged me to continue as his substitute with the Prince. I advised him to have recourse to the remedies which the Prior of Chabrières had left the King on his death. This quack cured the gout in the feet, and drove it to the head or some other part of the body; he had killed M. d' Elbœuf, the Abbé d' Harcourt, and the Duchesse d' Estrées; his pretended secrets caused a thousand assassinations besides. M. de Saint-Laurent thanked me for my good advice, but did not follow it. I also proposed to him to summon the Capucins of the Louvre, who were then exploiting their Powder of Sympathy, with a success which marvellous deaths had proved. The patient distrusted my pharmacopia, and, fearing to die a fortnight the sooner, would only have recourse to the first surgeon of the King. This was Félix, who had operated on His Majesty for fistula a year previously. This able man was assisted by Fagon, nicknamed the Poisoner, the King's physician.

This Fagon seemed hardly to be human, he was so hideous,

but his soul did not deserve any fairer lodging. He was accused by public opinion of the death of Queen Maria Theresa of Austria. His friendship for Madame de Maintenon gave food for thought. The Queen had an abscess under her arm; Fagon had the inconceivable idea to blood her. Gervais, the surgeon to whom Félix succeeded, said: "Monsieur, reflect seriously! It will be the Queen's death."

"Do as I bid you," replied Fagon, imperiously.

"It is your wish that I should kill my mistress," said the surgeon, shedding tears.

The bleeding took place; the disease attacked the heart; the emetic prescribed by Fagon completed this fine treatment, which brought its author money and office. Madame was prudent enough not to entrust her life to this executioner, whom Madame de Maintenon seemed to have made the instrument of her projects and vengeance.

This Fagon had wit withal. He said to the King, who was speaking of punishing libertinage: "People fell in love before you and me; they will always do so; why think harm of it? When I hear a preacher thunder from his pulpit against lovers, I think of a doctor who should say to a man with a bad cold: 'Don't cough; don't blow your nose.' Young folks are full of humours; they must find vent some way or other."

Whilst Fagon was attempting a difficult cure of M. de Saint-Laurent's gout, I endeavoured to acquire an influence over the mind of the Duc de Chartres, who, sick of his timorous and religious education, was delighted to emancipate himself with me. His character became, beneath my hands, plastic wax, which I moulded at my leisure. I noticed that his senses were in advance of his years, and I resolved to employ that precocious temperament for my ambitious designs. We issued abruptly from the rut in which the sub-governor had engaged us. I chose in history what was fitting to stir a young heart, to awaken new ideas in a mind of thirteen; I ceaselessly called images of pleasure before his eyes, and the name of woman came at all moments to excite his curiosity and attention; none the less, I had the prudence not to compromise myself with a child who could ruin me with a word, and I was so successful in disguising my seductions, that I won his affection without diminishing his respect. But the Arguses, who watched my

words and gestures, in order to repeat them to M. de Saint-Laurent, revived his jealousy as he learned of the empire that I was daily acquiring. From his bed he fomented hatred and led intrigues against me which I could not frustrate, except by changing for a time my system of conduct.

La Fontaine was the first to warn me of what was plotting at the sub-governor's pillow. He entered my room one day, smiling as usual; I had no suspicion that bad tidings were involved.

"Have you heard the latest scandal?" he asked.

"Good, is a new collection of *Tales* to appear?"

"No, it is not a *Tale*; Madame de La Meilleraye, who passes for the most pious prude at Court, at least in appearance, has been secretly married; guess to whom?"

"Doubtless to somebody."

"To Saint-Ruth, her page. Could you find anyone uglier or of more vulgar birth?"

"It seems there is some compensation for that slight fault, to a woman who clings to the substance."

"All these devout ladies are hard to satisfy. Madame de La Vieuville has contented herself with a child."

"Madame la Duchesse . . . ?"

"The governess. . . . I will tell you what is said about it: M. le Duc de Chartres, since the illness of M. de Saint-Laurent, runs after all the girls he meets, and we are assured that Madame, the wife of his governor, has treated him as if he had been a man; M. de La Vieuville is the only person who is ignorant, or feigns ignorance; upon my word, the lady has a beard which leads one to suspect her sex."

"How you astonish me! I can hardly believe you."

"Will you believe me if I tell you that they are going to expel you from the Palais-Royal?"

"You are jesting!"

"What do you think of it? They were speaking of it yesterday before the Duc de Vendôme, when I took your defence. It is M. de Saint-Laurent who owes you a grudge."

"But with what am I reproached?"

"A small matter; with corrupting the Prince, with lending yourself to all his caprices, and making him the prettiest young scapegrace in the world. In truth, since he has come into your hands, he has changed from head to foot; he goes to Mass less

often than to the chase; he would sooner hang on to the women's petticoats than to the robe of his confessor."

"Is it not better to make a prince of him than a monk?"

"Monsieur is not of your opinion, and if Madame did not laugh at her son's rogueries you would have had your dismissal a score of times already. I think, God forgive me, that the little rascal has taken to read my *Tales*; he recited me the whole of one yesterday."

I reminded myself that some days before I had lost a volume of these cursed *Tales*, and I understood that the Duc de Chartres must have secretly extracted it from my pocket. I was grateful to La Fontaine for his warnings, and prepared myself to disarm the treachery of M. de Saint-Laurent. The first steps I took taught me to what a degree people's minds were envenomed against me; I summoned my friends to my assistance; the Abbé Raslin persuaded M. de Vendôme to speak in my favour; the Abbé Chaulieu and the Marquis de La Fare sang my praises to Monsieur, who believed no more of them than he cared to, and answered: "I pass over the libertinage, but to lack religion, that is an unpardonable crime!"

I presented myself to Madame d'Orléans, whom I found at breakfast. She received me, as always, with German frankness, and knowing of old what a patient listener I was, regaled me with a rosary of anecdotes which were to be included in her budget for the day. She told me that M. le Duc de Guiche, married to Mademoiselle de Noailles, slept soundly the whole of his first nuptial night; that an obscene book had been found in the bed of Mademoiselle de Montmorency, maid of honour to Madame la Dauphine, and that Madame de Montchevreuil, governess of the maids of honour, was to be dismissed with all her flock. I had never seen her so intent on talking of everything. It was M. Letellier, Archbishop of Rheims, living with Madame de Bélinghen, his niece; it was the Sieur Lachaut-Montauban, brigadier of the King, and the Sieur de La Roche-sur-Buies, coming to fisticuffs in the street, although their swords hung at their sides. Finally, as a diversion to the scandalous chronicle of the day, she showed me her breakfast, which consisted of sausages, ham, and sundry German viands, salted, peppered, and saffroned.

"I cannot accustom myself," said she, "to coffee and

chocolate; you French destroy your stomachs with such drugs; even your soups give me the stomach-ache; I prefer the stews of my own country. Will you taste this *choucroute*; I have made the King himself partake of it?" They served me, and I feigned appetite to devour this infernal cookery, which burnt my throat and bowels; I came out with honour from this rough ordeal, and when I broached the reason of my visit, I saw that my gastric devotion had won me Madame's good wishes, and she did even more than she promised. Having still this terrible *choucroute* on my stomach, which afflicted me with nausea every moment, I went to my former patroness, who welcomed me with open arms as an old friend. I spared no oratorical precaution. I had put her in the best humour, when an unseasonable indigestion, which suddenly seized me, surprised me in a disorder of my dress by which the circumstances profited. Madame de Grancey covered me with perfumes, and succeeded in restoring me to a state of health which gave me time to regain my room and bed. I was confined there for several days, during which my friends pleaded my cause with Monsieur, who would have had me a thief and an assassin sooner than irreligious. When I was quite rid of the *choucroute*, I presented myself to the Chevalier de Lorraine, the favourite of Monsieur, according to the advice of Madame de Grancey, who was to announce me.

This Chevalier who was, to speak correctly, a *chevalier d'industrie*, had a hundred failings for one good quality. I understand that he was better than his reputation, and than his brother the Comte de Marsan. He robbed his master, and could not keep the money; he lied and gave his word of honour; he did not believe in God, and never missed Mass of Sundays. He harmonised these contradictions with wit and gaiety. He confessed that his love was not confined to women, and that he went to the pit of the opera to study the love of Socrates. I suspect Monsieur, notwithstanding his devoutness and his rosaries, to have encouraged these Greek manners, which concerned him more than people think. The Chevalier de Lorraine shared La Grancey with Monsieur in all good fellowship, and it was not till the end of his life that he wedded secretly Mademoiselle de Lillebonne. He had loved Mademoiselle de Fiennes, whom he left, it is said, because of a pretty dog of

which he was jealous. The Chevalier had a fine open countenance, more deceitful than himself, for it announced an honest man, and Madame de Sévigné was taken in by it. When I saw him, he was looking badly, being hardly recovered from an illness which had not damaged his figure, one of the best made at Court. I found him in conversation with Melchisedech Thévenot, who was merrily relating to him his amours at Rome, whither the King had sent him in 1654, to assist at the conclave which elected Pope Alexander VII.

"It is you, then," said the Chevalier, "in whom Madame de Grancey takes so much interest. I presume you are not ungrateful, and have given her proofs of your merit?"

"I am too conscious, Monsieur, of my little worth; do not, pray, treat a mere tutor as though he were a great lord."

I knew too well what kind of man I had to deal with not to adapt my words to his character, and I was adroit enough to drop the tone of ceremony.

"Ah, my friend," he went on with a laugh, "I am told that you have turned your Duc de Chartres into a proper rascal; Madame de La Vieuville violated him, and he never cried out for help."

"The Prince," added Thévenot, with his pinched lips, which gave him the look of a living epigram,—"the Prince knows too well the respect he owes to his governor, to care to miss any of Madame's lessons."

"Lord!" I answered ingenuously, "I vow to you that if he had followed my counsels, he would have made a better choice for his initiation."

"What do you know of it?" retorted the Chevalier. "Monsieur assures me that the bearded Duchess would instruct a young man nicely."

"Then," I interrupted, "they would be wrong in showing me the door."

"Have no fear; we take you under our protection, and Thévenot, who is very intimate with La Vieuville, will undertake to support you on his side."

"How can I prove my gratitude to you?"

"By making your Duke a ne'er-do-well like yourself, and above all by playing tricks on the Palatine!"

"Monsieur, I ask you for time to give the lie to the bad

reports that have been made to Monseigneur the Duc d' Orléans, and you will see what Dubois can do."

"Remember, that since your pupil has been made Chevalier of the King's orders, at the same time as Messieurs de Bourbon, de Conti, and Du Maine, you are teaching grammar to a prince of the blood."

"However, I am going to treat him so harshly that I intend him to complain of me to Monsieur."

"'Sdeath! 'Tis an expedient beyond suspicion, and you are a cunning scoundrel to have thought of it."

The Chevalier de Lorraine and Thévenot reiterated the assurance of their services, and I began to put my irons in the fire; I had the good fortune to succeed.

The suspicions excited against me were not yet dissipated. The Abbé Renaudot and the Abbé Leblanc had orders to be present at the lessons, and often Messieurs Faure, Maucroix, and La Fontaine were sent in addition. In answer to the complacences which I was accused of showing to the Duc de Chartres, I changed my key so brutally, that in a few days he loathed me as much as he had loved me. I spared no pains to thwart him, to contradict him, and tears of anger often shone in his eyes. It was not that he respected me enough to suffer without complaining; he reviled me openly, and I then begged the persons who were present to tell Monsieur how the lesson had passed; the Prince was not frightened by my threats, and threatened me in his turn. This misunderstanding was a cause of Monsieur's return to better sentiments towards me, and he soon took my part as much as he could; for fathers have a habit of never believing the complaints that children make of their teachers. I was thus high in the favour of the Duc d' Orléans, and in the hatred of the Duc de Chartres, when M. de Saint-Laurent died opportunely.

It was on the 3rd of August 1687. I was giving my lesson in presence of the Abbé Leblanc; the Prince was reading to me a portrait of the Cardinal de Richelieu, which he had composed after my notes at the preceding lesson. But instead of representing the Cardinal as minister, whose figure in history is so great and imposing, he had taken it into his head to sketch a satirical picture resembling myself. I remember that he said, amongst other things: "Pedantic as a village schoolmaster, insolent as a stable varlet, rascal enough for six, this Abbé."

I stopped him with great composure.

"Pray, Monsieur, where have you found all these fine things?"

"Are you going to claim them as your own property?"

"I would have you observe that the Cardinal de Richelieu was an abbé neither in name nor estate."

"He was as much one as you, I imagine."

"Monsieur, if you do your tasks no better, you shall not go to the chase to-morrow."

"Very fine, Abbé, what you say is not a precept; it 's a counsel perhaps."

"Monsieur," cried the Abbé Leblanc, rising, "you forget yourself; is it thus we bring up young princes!"

"Monsieur l' Abbé," I answered angrily, "what do you presume to say?"

"You have failed in respect to Monseigneur."

"I know well in what you fail!"

This sally caused the Duc de Chartres to laugh; the Abbé Leblanc grew scarlet, and went out without saying a word. I went on more calmly with the lesson, when I was sent for on the part of the sub-governor.

M. de Saint-Laurent was convalescent. I found him out of bed, sitting by the fire, wrapped in his dressing-gown; I understood that M. l' Abbé Leblanc had related his grievances to him.

"Monsieur," he said to me sharply, "you have behaved disgracefully."

"No, Monsieur," I retorted.

"I am going to inform Monseigneur le Duc d' Orléans of the scandalous scene which has just occurred; you shall learn the distance there is between a rascal like yourself and a prince of the blood."

"We can learn at all ages, Monsieur."

"I will have you driven out with whips."

"Are you not afraid of retaliations?"

"Out of here, wretch, varlet!"

As I showed no sign of budging, he left his seat to throw me out. Suddenly, I saw him grow pale, totter, and fall stark upon the floor. The muscles of his face were twisted into horrible convulsions; his eyes were the colour of blood. I felt a cold sweat pour from all my limbs, and fled, fearing lest I should be

accused of having killed him; I almost overturned Félix, who was coming upstairs.

"What is the matter, Dubois?" he asked, seeing my state of confusion.

"M. de Saint-Laurent!" I answered; "he is dead!"

"Dead!" he cried, going towards the apartment I had just left. I followed him mechanically. The hapless sub-governor had ceased to breathe. Félix examined him in silence, and said: "Sudden apoplexy!" Then he added: "Now, Dubois, you are governor!"

I was not guilty. Well! these words made me shudder. My enemies, and I have many, like all great men, have said that M. de Saint-Laurent died of a colic, giving to understand by that, that I had poisoned him. It is so easy to poison folk after they are dead! The fact is that I have always had a horror of crime, although I am spotted with vices like an ermine. To say that the death of Saint-Laurent caused me great regret, would be an incredible lie; on the contrary, I thanked the destiny which served me so well, and, to utilise the occasion, solicited the place which the deceased put at my disposal. I encountered many obstacles to overcome, not the least of which was the aversion the Duc de Chartres had vowed to me. He said and did a thousand extravagances to escape from his tyrant; and I was tempted to lose courage, when the King proposed to appoint as preceptor to the Duc de Chartres, the celebrated Racine, *protégé* of Madame de Maintenon. Racine, whose wife's example had made him pious, had not occupied himself with literature for twelve years. It seems that he refused Monsieur's offers. My friends and protectors redoubled their efforts. Fortunately, Madame learned, I know not how, of my relations with Madame de Grancey, and from that moment I was included in the hatred she bore to her husband's favourite. She tried to oppose my interests, and Monsieur, who had no love for his second wife, took the ill she could say against me as a recommendation. The Chevalier de Lorraine, who saw with pleasure anyone as vicious as himself, gave himself no rest until the place was secured.

"My son," said he to me, "intrigue is thy daughter or thy mother; beware of being punished like Madaillan, who had his head cut off for having lain only with his daughter."

Whilst I was withering away in expectation, the Abbé Chaulieu

arrived from the provinces, came to see me, and urged me to ask for the abbey of Livry, vacant since the 23rd of August, through the death of the Abbé de Coulanges.

"The benefice has good revenues," he said, "and with abbeys, as with other things, it is only the first step that costs; I will do my utmost to obtain this one for you."

"With all my heart," said I; "only I am soliciting elsewhere."

"Can I be of any use to you, my dear Abbé?

"M. de Saint-Laurent is dead."

"Good news! I will serve you warmly. I am off immediately to Fontainebleau, where the Court stays. I will speak to the King if needs be, and the abbeys will come after. Indeed, the abbey of Livry, which I looked upon with an envious eye, was given, on the 1st of November following, to the Abbé Seguier, who resigned the Bishopric of Nîmes."

Meanwhile, the Court had returned to Versailles; the works of Trianon, which had caused much illness, were coming to an end. The Abbé Chaulieu, who was tormenting the king and princes in my behalf, had begun to despair of success. The envious had spread a thousand calumnies about me, with which the ears of Louis XIV were full. Once, before all the Court, he recommenced his demand, tracing my panegyric in broad lines.

"My dear Abbé," said the King, with kindness, "you are singularly mistaken about your *protégé;* persons who know him well have assured me that he played, drank, and was fond of women."

"I do not know, Sire; but in any case it is true that if he plays he never loses, that if he drinks he is never drunk, and that if he loves women he never attaches himself."

"Truly," said the King, "that is excellent praise, and my brother will do well to reward such a clever man."

CHAPTER VII

DUBOIS SUB-GOVERNOR — BLOUIN THE MATHEMATICIAN — THE QUARREL OF MADAME DE GRANCEY WITH MADAME DE BOUILLON—NEW SYSTEM OF EDUCATION—THE YOUNG SAINT-SIMON —CONFIDENCES—MADAME DE CASTELNAU AND MADAME DE VITRY—DUBOIS UNMASKS HIMSELF TO THE YOUNG PRINCE —THE PROMISES—THE VALETS-DE-CHAMBRE

More than a month had elapsed since the death of M. de Saint-Laurent, and I fulfilled the functions of sub-governor without having the title or prerogatives. I persevered, however, in my solicitations, continued my visits, and having little confidence in Court promises, which cost so little, was afraid of being outstripped by some more adroit competitor; for as soon as there is question of a place or a pension to give, you see the aspirants flock together like birds of prey upon a corpse. Besides a goodly number of abbés of all shades, several gentlemen had joined the ranks, and I was tempted "*to despair from excess of hope*," as the sonnet in the *Misanthrope* says; but I plucked up courage when Chaulieu informed me that the King had become my protector.

On the 30th of September, I was wandering gloomily in the park, when the little Abbé Coiffier d'Effiat threw himself upon my neck with an air of condolence. I thought at first of everything except good news.

"Well!" he said to me, "you are sub-governor."

"Impossible!" I cried, not daring to put faith in such good fortune.

"Your commission was signed yesterday, but . . . "

"What does your *but* signify, my dear sir?"

"Fifteen hundred francs less for yourself."

"And, consequently, fifteen hundred francs more for——"

"The Duc or the Duchesse de La Vieuville, as tribute-money, recompense—what you will."

"I understand; it is the price of a lesson given by the lady

to the Duc de Chartres. They had better have chosen an opera-dancer. . . . "

"You see, we are economical."

"No matter; I thank you for having told me."

"I have done better; I think I have contributed, to the best of my little power, to your nomination. . . . "

"Thanks a thousand times," I cried; "I see the commencement of my fortune; I see myself, already, with a revenue of two hundred thousand livres at the end of my career."

Thévenot was walking in the garden with M. Blouin, brother of the Governor of Versailles; they heard this last exclamation of joy.

"Monsieur," said M. Blouin to me, "I should understand your prayer if you hoped for riches in order to enjoy them; but at the end of your career a revenue of two hundred thousand will be useless to you, unless you count on taking it away with you, which remains to be seen."

"I will wager, Monsieur, that you are a mathematician?" I replied.

I had guessed right.

Once vested in my new dignity, I went to thank all the persons who had interested themselves in my advancement, and I did not forget Madame, who received me graciously enough, reproached me with having sacrificed her to La Grancey, and related to me how that lady had come to blows with Madame de Bouillon, who had maliciously commentated on the results of her amours, alleging that the Chevalier de Lorraine had to thank her for his yellow complexion and wretched health. I admired the effect of hatred, which made her entirely forget that she bore me a grudge also; and I was re-established in her good graces, until her son's marriage came to embroil us entirely.

The moment had come to change my system with my pupil, whom I was about to dispose of at my free will; I even refused a young teacher who was offered me as an assistant, and I gradually alienated Messieurs Leblanc, Renaudot, Faure, Maucroix and La Fontaine, who did not even assist any longer at my lessons. These preliminaries had been taken during the two months in which I had exercised my functions *ad interim*. When my nomination left me free to act, the field was my own. I had studied the character of the young Prince, who, without

my assisting in this reform, had shaken off the yoke of religion which M. de Saint-Laurent had imposed on him; I watched his thoughts and desires turning towards that sensuality which seemed so favourable to my projects. I had only to open out the path for him, and I was certain to see him plunge into it of his own accord. Meanwhile, he remembered the harshness which I had feigned towards him, and I realised that an explanation was necessary.

The son of the Duc de Saint-Simon came often to the Palais-Royal to play with the Duc de Chartres; his father had brought him with him to Saint-Cloud, where we were, and his visits occupied the hours of recreation. This child, who was a year younger than the Prince, was also of a less precocious temperament; it was never even overmuch developed. 'Tis he who, up to the present day, has not quitted M. le Régent; if God or the devil spare me long enough, I will pay him a long-standing debt. At the age of twelve he was greatly lacking in animation, ever grave, ever observant, talking little, listening greatly. The Duc de Chartres, on the other hand, had an incredible vivacity. One day I saw them go into the park and disappear amongst the bushes; the idea struck me to follow them and discover what great matter was the subject of their conversation. I stole noiselessly as far as the spot where they were seated on a marble bench in secret conference. They did not notice my approach.

"Do you know that Madame de La Vieuville is not beautiful?" said the little Saint-Simon; "in your place I should have preferred Madame de Grancey's eldest daughter."

"Bah!" said the Duc de Chartres, "one must begin somewhere, and I doubt whether an innocent girl would have taught me as much as La Vieuville; now I am in a position to teach others."

"It is quite time I knew as much."

"Apply to some lady who will make a pleasure of teaching you. The Maréchale de Castlenau, for instance."

"Fie! I have heard my father say, when he thought I was not listening, that she would lie with the devil if he was made man."

"Do you prefer the Maréchale de La Ferté?"

"Lord! all these Maréchales are mighty ancient! I am quite of the opinion of M. de La Feuillade, who said, speaking of the Duchesse de Vitry . . . "

"I don't know her."

"She is separated from her husband, and lives at the Conception, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, where the ambassadors go and court her."

"And what did M. de La Feuillade say?"

"That this lady was like the old ribands which are sold to foreigners when they are out of fashion in France."

This sally made me laugh, and I issued from my hiding-place with a good-humoured air, which struck the Duc de Chartres; he imagined that I was delighted at having at least found something which would bring him a reprimand from Monsieur; he thought, perhaps, I had overheard the whole conversation. His face grew red, his eyes flashed, and he looked at me haughtily.

As for Saint-Simon, he was so terrified at my apparition that he ran off helter-skelter. I had no mind to run after him.

"Pray tell me, Abbé," said the Prince, "are you my teacher or a spy upon me?"

"Neither, Monseigneur, if you will allow me," I replied; "my ambition only is to have the honour of being your servant."

I pronounced these words with so natural an accent of respect and cordial frankness, that the Prince could only consider it an irony; he waited in an uncertain silence for my explanation. I begged him to resume his seat, and sat down by his side.

"Monseigneur," said I, with the mystery befitting the overture I was about to make, "God forbid I should tyrannise over your tastes, or cause you the least pain; I have never had any other desire than that of being agreeable to you. Blame no one but M. de Saint-Laurent for the unworthy behaviour that I have allowed myself to use with you; I implore you to forgive me it; but I acted at the dictates of necessity; and I do not regret the unbecoming treatment I have dared to make you, my Prince and my master, undergo."

"Alas! Abbé," interrupted the Duc de Chartres, quite softened, "is not this but one more act in the comedy you have been playing since you came into the world?"

"It is a justification, Monseigneur, and I ask you as a favour to hear me to the end. At last I have obtained the title of sub-governor, which I had to secure by giving you pain, and I am ready to prove my zeal and devotion to you."

"And if I begged you to let me alone and take yourself off?"

"Monseigneur, I should obey!"

"Do you know, Abbé, I am tempted to take you at your word."

"No; you will not do that when you know the extent of that devotion which is yours for life and death. Your tastes, your caprices, your passions are in the order of nature, I wish you to be able to satisfy them."

"The devil! I see we shall understand one another amazingly; I have been chained up and you set me free. Dubois the governor would be a rogue I should have had turned out by my lackeys, Dubois, the man of confidence, will be worth somewhat less, and be somewhat better treated."

"Thanks to what I have been fortunate enough, through a reprehensible indiscretion, to overhear, Monseigneur, I see already what services I can render you, outside my office."

"Really, you feel strong enough to risk——"

"My life, if you require it. You have found that the greatest pleasures are not those of your age, and since nature has granted you an advance of two years of youth, I counsel you to profit by it; time lost is ever the worst employed, and I presume that Madame de La Vieuville has not excluded every other woman. . . . "

"Ah, Dubois, my dear Dubois, quite the contrary; ever since the *Tales* of M. de La Fontaine (I stole them out of your pocket) have taken the bandage from my eyes, I am full of emotions which only ask to come to light. Madame de La Vieuville (and I owe her gratitude none the less) has given me infinite desires; if I possessed a beautiful girl, white, well-made . . ."

"'Tis a fruit which is not rare in Paris, and I will do my utmost to secure you one as soon as we have returned."

"But how? I never go out alone, and I have always a host of importunate people round me. What is to be done?"

"Eyes that see too far must be shut. I answer for everything; you have but to desire; I undertake not to let you languish."

"You undertake to find her, to bring her to me! My dear Abbé, wait till I am big, I will make your fortune."

The young Prince's impatience was such that, alleging some pretext, we returned on the following day to the Palais-Royal. The Duc de Chartres tormented me to fulfil my promise; he wished to make a new acquaintance that very evening. I restrained him for two days, and this time sufficed me to regain the affection which had been lost to me for a year, and I made it my

task to increase it even; I summoned Purel, my *valet-de-chambre*, who had shown some attachment to me.

"My friend," said I, handing him ten louis, "this is the first month's instalment of a pension I shall give you."

"I see that I must earn it," he answered; "tell me what I have to do."

"A little matter you shall know later; but discretion is of more importance than everything else; and if you fail in that, His Royal Highness will know how to punish you."

"If you doubt my goodwill and intelligence, do not pay me in advance."

"Sound Laurent, the first valet of M. le Duc de Chartres, and see what his capacities are. To-night I shall have need of you."

This Laurent was a prize rascal; Dubois, his comrade, who was his match in this point, had been dismissed at my request, because his name would have disgusted me with my own.

CHAPTER VIII

ANXIETIES AND CASES OF CONSCIENCE—THE LITTLE GATE IN THE RUE DE RICHELIEU—THE FIFTY THOUSAND CROWNS—THE INGÉNUE—THE DUC LOUIS DE BOURBON—MONSEIGNEUR TOTAL—THE FIRE AND THE ESCAPE—THE DINNER OF M. DE LOUVOIS—M. DE COULANGES AND MADEMOISELLE DE SERRE—THE DUC DE CHARTRES' ACQUIREMENTS

I DREAMT all day of the delicate morsel I was to procure that same evening for the Duc de Chartres, and, to tell the truth, was mightily puzzled how to find what I required. The Prince's health was confided to me, and I had not time enough for a preliminary investigation. One had to commend oneself to Providence, and judge folks by appearances, a method that often results in mistakes. I was tempted, at times, to provision myself from certain houses, which I frequented with confidence; but this was to seek for accidents at the fountain-head, and it seemed to me more prudent to trust to chance. I might have thought, of course, of going directly to some Court lady, known for her dissipated conduct; but, apart from there being even less security in such a quarter, I should have exposed myself to a dangerous rivalry; for I know none so virtuous as to refuse to become the mistress of a prince of the blood. Now a mistress has, ordinarily, more power than a governor, however accommodating he may be. I resolved, therefore, to follow my first plan, as the least hazardous.

In the evening, Purel brought Laurent to me; he was disposed to serve me. These varlets had guessed what was in question, and I saw them smile.

"My sons," I said to them, "there is gold here for you to win, or else, a whipping, or better still; if you took it into your heads to betray us, M. le Duc de Chartres would punish you in princely fashion, and ten years of the Bastille would not see the end of it. Your offices may possibly be augmented as your pension has been; but for the moment I require nothing but inviolate secrecy and all the prudence of which you are capable. The Prince depends

upon you. To-night, about ten o'clock, you will open the little door in the Rue de Richelieu, one of you will keep watch upon the stairs, the other in my room, through which everyone must pass in order to reach that of His Highness, who will receive nobody. In the event of Monsieur coming, find some means of preventing him from entering; the door, moreover, must be securely fastened."

After these preliminary instructions, I paid Laurent, as I had Purel, and reviewed my forces.

"Is it for to-night, Abbé," asked the Prince familiarly, as he entered in the most gallant *négligé*. "At what o'clock will the lady of my thoughts be here? Is she fair or dark, tall or short? Has she a small foot?"

"These are questions, Monseigneur, which she will answer better than I; let it alone, and you will be pleased with Dubois, your purveyor in ordinary."

"But where is she?"

"Not here, it seems, for you would have discovered her, even were she hidden. . . ."

"In your pocket, do you mean? Accursed Abbé, you make me languish thus, in order to heighten my desires. Tell me, how do you like this coat I have had made?"

"Almost worthy of you—that is to say, charming. But to talk of business."

"At another time."

"No, if it please your Highness; you see what reproaches I am exposing myself to for your sake; if the fine governor's part I am playing be discovered I run the risk of prison."

"To tell the truth, you will have earned it."

"I beg you to be so good as to take the whole responsibility on yourself; that will give me incredible courage, and every night may resemble this one."

"You want your salary, child; I am too much the Prince to haggle with you; I abandon to you all the little profits you may make by the management of my purse."

"Monseigneur, I should not have waited for your permission."

"Rascal, I will sign a promise to pay you fifty thousand crowns on my majority."

"Here is a pen to hand, ink and paper; I have never doubted but that your Highness knew how to write."

"Now, I swear to you, to take upon myself any consequences that may arise in this world."

"I charge myself with the consequences in the other, and shall feel none the worse for that. Monseigneur, I hope to present my bill when it falls due; in the meantime, I go about my work."

"Take care you do not return alone; what shall I read in the interval?"

"The poems of Madame de La Suze, or Benserade's rondeaux."

"To the devil with all such insipid trash! I am not a lover of the idyllic, and the *Tales* of La Fontaine will prepare me for all."

"God and Love grant it," said I.

I made a toilette which I had prepared for this occasion. It was an entirely stone-coloured suit, and I had also the absence of the moon to favour my incognito. I had pushed the door behind me, and, hidden in the recess of a shop, I waited, and waited long. Several companies of the watch passed without perceiving me; some drunken men jostled me as they staggered along, but I did not see the shadow of a petticoat. I had made a mistake in the hour; the *grisettes* went back to their homes at eight o'clock: 'tis an important detail in the profession I was adopting, a detail I learned subsequently from the faithful Laurent. We were in the month of October, the coolness of the night sent a shiver through me, and the thickening fog promised me a catarrh of the first quality on the morrow. In the distance I heard cries, and methought I recognised a woman's voice. Her steps drew near, and I distinguished a white form a short distance off. I was quick to make a reconnaissance, at the risk of finding myself cumbered with a face as hideous as the seven mortal sins, supposing the seven mortal sins to be all hideous, a fact which I deny.

"Mademoiselle," said I, stopping her abruptly, "what is the matter with you?" She thought I was a foot-pad bespeaking her purse, and uttered cries which did not disconcert me. "Lord!" I protested, "you are mistaken as to my intentions, which are honest and charitable; I heard you cry out, and I have come to know if it is in my power to console you."

"Alas! Monsieur," she replied. And this *alas* was her only answer; but she accented it in so soft a voice, that I was charmed with my discovery before I had seen it.

"Mademoiselle," I continued, "at this hour you run some

risk in the streets; and if the business which has brought you out so late cannot be put off, permit me to protect you with my company."

"I am sore afraid, Monsieur, that I must pass the night on the pavement; I have no shelter, and I am going where God wills."

"No; I will not abandon you in such a cruel situation, and I offer you my house, where you can remain till day."

I replied myself to this proposition of mine, and pushed her, almost without resistance, on to the staircase, the door of which I shut with precaution. I said to myself, if I have made a mistake, I will send my duchess to lie with Laurent or Purel. Chance served better than I had hoped. Laurent came to meet us with a light. I stopped in ecstasy at the sight of this angelic creature; her blue eyes, stained with tears, had a touching grace; her fresh mouth, her divine figure, even the disorder of her hair —all was made expressly for the Duc de Chartres, who was devoured with impatience.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "have the goodness to follow me; there is someone who will be enchanted to see you."

She blushed, and restrained her tears, when she had remarked the richness of my liveries, and the luxury of the apartments I led her through.

The Prince, on perceiving her, leapt to her neck as if she had been an old acquaintance; and this commencement of a good understanding which was established between them, seemed to me a good omen both for her and for me.

"My dear Dubois," said my pupil to me, "you serve me royally."

"If the King heard you," I replied, "he would be mightily flattered: his Maintenon is no longer sixteen."

The little lady began to laugh, and I saw that in thinking to have snared an *ingénue*, I had fallen upon a trained bird. I was not displeased at this, since the Prince appeared satisfied. Her name was Rose, and she wove a most proper story for us, which proved to me also that she was marvellously endowed with the talent of conversation, so precious in the interludes of love. The eyes of the young Duke devoured her. But I had been kicking my heels long enough to feel the need of recruiting my belly. A collation was served, at which I assisted, and the

princess showed us that she had an appetite of the best equipment. After having wasted another hour in gossip and laughter, I obeyed a glance of Monseigneur, withdrew to my chamber, and slept until the morning.

At an early hour I entered the apartment of the Duc de Chartres, who was awake; the little one had already risen with a complexion more blooming than the night before. I told her to prepare for departure; and having embraced the Prince, whom she did not know, she took once more the road to the little door. She showed me the *rouleau* of a hundred louis which *the child* (it was thus she designated the Duc de Chartres) had slipped into her hand, begging her to return the same night. I claimed myself the right of a commission, and kissed a mouth which did not turn away. We parted good friends, and for some days I awaited the *ingénue*; but she never returned. I have since learned that the Abbé Bodeau had stolen her from us for the harem of the fat Louvois. The Prince was distressed at not seeing her, then consoled himself, and begged me to find him a new creature. The confidences he made to me completed my conviction that Rose was a virtue mighty well broken in.

The Duc de Chartres said to me one day: "My cousin, Monsieur de Duc, has been following in my footsteps; only he neglected to hide his game, and the King is much incensed with him and his tutor."

"Who told you this, Monseigneur?"

"This letter from Louis de Bourbon, at Fontainebleau, where the Court has returned. His father, Monsieur le Prince, fell from his horse while hunting, but was luckier than M. de Villeroy, who broke his arm in two places. The governor of M. le Duc, being less under supervision owing to this accident, took to play."

"Who is this governor?"

"M. Bellegarde de Saintrailles, who has nothing in common with Xaintrailles de Pottron, under Charles VII. In short, whilst this little gentleman was losing all his money at hazard, his pupil was ruining himself on the other side. M. le Duc got into a hackney-coach with his friends—Chemerault, the Marquis de Bellefonds, Château-Regnault, and the little Broglie; he took them to Paris, to Madame Chevalier's, notorious, it is said, for the profession she exercises; and the Lord knows the pretty

debauch they laid to the account of their conscience! The King, having heard of this exemplary conduct, wanted to banish the accomplices of M. le Duc, who was generous enough to take all the blame to himself."

"And the governor?"

"He keeps his place, and the King told M. le Prince that he was astonished to see a man of his kind in his carriage. It seems that the nobility of M. de Saintrailles is not of ancient origin. M. le Prince answered that the Chevaliers de Rivière, the Lussans, and the Briords enjoyed the like qualification. The King shut his mouth, saying that there was a great difference between these gentlemen and that lout."

"Do you think, Monseigneur, that the Dubois are any more noble than the Saintrailles?"

"I care very little about it; but I know they are cleverer and greater rogues."

It was the occasion to present my account, with which anyone but a prince would have been but indifferently suited; it was entitled: "*Part of the payments made by me for Monseigneur Total*"; and it amounted to a hundred louis, expended *in silence*, *collation*, *et cætera*, the whole relative to Mademoiselle Rose. The Prince, who was quite expert in calculations, was mindful of his signature, and accepted the conditions of Monseigneur Total. He paid and burned the bill. Since that day I have never drawn up my private accounts more exactly. The Duc de Chartres did not haggle with a servant as devoted as I was. He asked me anew, and I hastened to satisfy him. The result was again favourable to me.

One evening when, from the threshold of the *Gate of Love*, as we had baptised it, I was watching all that passed in the Rue de Richelieu, my gaze wandered to the house which faced me; through the panes, that the light from within lit up, I made out a young girl, who was ready to retire to rest. I followed all her movements with an invincible curiosity; and although her features could not be distinguished, I formed the most agreeable images of them. It was with genuine displeasure that I saw the lamp extinguished, and I was already putting off to the morrow the inquiries I meant to make about her, when a smell of smoke made me conceive hopes. I was not long in perceiving that the fire was in the house inhabited by my sleeper. I called Laurent

and Purel; I gave them hurried instructions, and we began to cry "Fire!" and break in the house door. Before the Capucins had run up with their buckets and pumps, the two valets had entered the house, spreading the alarm, and seeking the object of my interest. Laurent penetrated into a room in flames, and the sight of a woman's clothing induced him to seize in his arms her whom he found lying half suffocated on the bed. I saw him arrive proudly with his prey, and I was about to introduce him into the Palace, when Purel, loaded with a similar burden, threw me into singular embarrassment. However, by the light of the fire, which was making progress, I thought myself able to make a choice, and I made a sign to Purel to bring in the swooning woman he carried. Hardly was my capture in surety, when I rid Laurent of his. She was an old woman, whom at the first glance I thought must be the mother; I left her in the hands of the good people who had come to her assistance, and regained my little door, which I closed prudently; whilst the Capucins threw water, and the loungers gazed at the fire. Purel had deposited the unconscious young girl in the Prince's chamber; the Duc de Chartres had got on so well that, when I returned, she had come to her senses again. She paid no attention to me; my attire gave me the air of a servant. I noticed with joy that she was even lovelier than I had imagined. The Prince kissed her hands, which she did not withdraw; she wept and asked for her mother; we swore that her mother had been saved, and that she would see her next day. She was so innocent that she believed anything we wished, and the Prince wished more than she thought for. She lost her timid airs, and gave way to such mad gaiety that I went away to bed, to give them leisure to do likewise. This they did not fail to do; and on the morrow I found the little person livelier, merrier than ever; she had forgotten her mother, and would hear no more talk of departure. The Duc de Chartres kept her for several days, hidden in a wardrobe, where he fed her with confections; and I was obliged to restore her forcibly to her mother, who was seeking her all over Paris. The poor woman was overjoyed to recover her daughter; but, having a suspicion of what had happened, without knowing where, she hastened prudently to find her a husband who should take the responsibility of the past and future.

I should never finish, if I were to pause at each novelty I

procured for the Duc de Chartres. As I feared lest he should come to attach himself to some passion which might damage the influence I exercised over him, I arranged it in such fashion that the *grisettes* passed no more than one night at the Palais-Royal. The Prince listened to reason when I represented to him that the success of his amours depended on this measure. He retired about eight o'clock to his apartment, under pretext of working, and the amazing amount of information he had acquired, gave plausibility to this studious withdrawal. I descended into the Rue de Richelieu, and lay in ambuscade, passing in review embroideresses, milliners, washerwomen, sempstresses, and all the *grisettes* who issued from the shops. I rarely returned alone; and I venture to say, in praise of the exquisite tact I possessed, that the Prince never repented of the conquests I made for him in the street. At midnight the young girl received a few louis, and was escorted back, by Laurent or Purel, to the spot whence I had taken her. In this manner, the conduct of the Prince was safe from all suspicion; none of the initiated suspected that the little door and secluded staircase belonged to the Palais-Royal. In order to dispel even indiscreet observations, which the sumptuous character of the apartments might have excited, I persuaded the Prince to establish the temple of his pleasures in a little closet, very simply furnished, which was nearer the staircase. The Duc de Chartres had not yet gone in search of amours outside the Palais-Royal. He was dining one day with M. de Louvois; conversation arose about the new postal law, which forbade the carriage of any other object than letters.

"I know a lady," said the minister, "who will suffer from this decree; I have a packet here, addressed to her from Bordeaux, where I am told she has a lover."

"Monsieur," cried M. de Coulanges, whose words were more gallant than his actions, "it would be good of you to forward her these trifles, so pleasing to a tender heart."

After dinner the box was brought in, untied, and in the midst of an immense quantity of rose-leaves we found a man's portrait, which gave no bad opinion of the original.

"Coulanges," said M. de Louvois, "I will give you that. Do the honours of it to the lady, and prove her gratitude."

The lady was Mademoiselle de Serre, living in the Rue de Condé. Coulanges carried off the portrait, and on the following

day sent it to its address by a lackey, with a letter couched in rhyme and prose. He thereby escaped the consequences of his politeness, being, as I said, very rich in madrigals, but very poor in other respects. The Duc de Chartres would have greatly liked to undertake the restitution, but he dared not suggest it; only he informed himself of the results of Coulanges' mission, and learning that the latter had not ventured in person, the idea came to him to take advantage of the opportunity which the poet had let slip. He had heard that Mademoiselle de Serre's beauty and wit were worth all that one could do for her. I occupied myself grudgingly with this intrigue, which began in a more serious manner than I could have wished. I presented myself before this lady, who had received Coulanges' letter with more pleasure than his enclosure. The portrait had not revived a love already extinguished in her heart, and which she was in haste to rekindle for some other object who was not a picture; she would have embraced me when I informed her that I was in the service of M. de Coulanges, and my abbé's dress did not prevent her from overwhelming me with questions, which I answered to my pupil's advantage. She handed me a letter which she had prepared, and the Duc de Chartres replied to it in person. He had forbidden me to accompany him, and the time he remained with the young lady left me in no anxiety as to the issue of his *liaison*. He returned very late, and, as he repeated the same proceedings for several days, I feared I had found my master. It was nothing of the kind: Mademoiselle de Serre, pretty as she was, had not the wherewithal to fix the most inconstant character in existence; she did not even make the endeavour, and I was soon pleased to see the Prince discontinue his visits. M. de Coulanges, who only appeared in this affair in order to furnish the Prince with the means of succeeding, had, none the less, all the honour of it, which his conceit was not loath to accept; the Duc de Chartres himself joked him about his relations with the unknown of the Rue de Condé. He defended himself but faintly, as though he would fain have the thing believed; he played admirably the part of the man of *bonnes fortunes*. These ephemeral loves had no influence upon the Prince's studies and progress; I had nothing more to teach him, and I studied with him in order to excite his emulation. His mind had an admirable dexterity; he succeeded in all that

he undertook; his memory was marvellous, his judgment prompt and just, his taste exquisite. With these qualities, he really surpassed me, and my empire acquired fresh roots daily in the friendship he bore me. He wrote verses better than a professed poet, and his talent for painting is signalised by the pictures of Daphnis and Chloe with which he adorned the cabinet of Madame d'Orléans. He composed the words and music of several operas, which were performed in his palace; sculpture and architecture were not strange to him; he had a most extended knowledge of history, medicine, and geography. But the science which he practised with love was chemistry, and he still occupies himself with it to-day; he made me acquire a taste for it, and we passed nights in the midst of furnaces and alembics. For myself, naturally incredulous, I saw in these operations only learned combinations of the human mind; I sought only for the nature of things. The Prince was beset by a prejudice which my sarcasms could not shake: imbued with the principles of the *demonomania* of Bodin, he imagined understandings with spirits which have no existence, and dreamt of the philosopher's stone. I do not think he has found it.

CHAPTER IX

DUBOIS AT COURT—BEAUTY OF LOUIS XIV—HIS UNCLEANLINESS —HIS GLUTTONY—THE PRIVATE COVER—HIS LOVE OF ETIQUETTE—THE THRASHING AT MARLY—PETTY TYRANNIES —THE KING'S SELFISHNESS—HIS JOURNEYS—PREDICAMENT OF THE DUCHESSE DE CHEVREUSE AND CHIVALRY OF THE DUC DE BEAUVILLIERS—THE SUFFERINGS OF MADAME DE MAINTENON—THE KING'S MISTRESSES—MADAME HENRIETTE OF ENGLAND, MONSIEUR'S FIRST WIFE—MADAME'S DEATH BY POISON—PURNON FIRST MAJOR-DOMO OF MONSIEUR'S HOTEL—HIS REVELATIONS—RECALL OF THE CHEVALIER DE LORRAINE

In my quality as sub-governor of the Duc de Chartres, I soon had my entry to Court. My cloth was already a good recommendation, under the rule of Madame de Maintenon, which was that of the Church. But, thank God, I was not the only one to whom, in that devout Court, the old proverb was applicable: "It is not the cowl that makes the monk."

It has been loudly asserted, in order that he might hear it, no doubt, that the King was the most handsome man in his kingdom. Why not in the world and of his century? Flatterers are not the folk to take alarm at so little. In respect of beauty I could cite a goodly number of persons who yielded in nothing to Louis XIV; the Chevalier de Lorraine, who caused Benserade to say: "I am only consoled for not being M. d'Armagnac, because I am not M. de Saint-Hérem, Racine, the Duc de Richelieu, and so many others. However, I know few who actually surpass him in good looks. When one saw him for the first time, one could hardly avoid being dazzled. Ambassadors who were not accustomed to sustain his gaze, have often stopped short in their harangues. In his walk, his speech, his countenance, in his whole person, there was an air of grandeur, a noble and imposing character, which came from the opinion he had formed of an absolute king, like the Olympian Jupiter shaking the universe

with his frown. His face was correctly beautiful, in spite of his age; and his mouth, opened frequently, as if to show his teeth, had not that foolish expression which such a habit often lends to the physiognomy. One would have believed he was always on the point of speaking, and this gave the more value to his rare words, measured and weighed in the balance. Pretty feet and handsome legs are advantages not to be despised; and the King, who was very proud of his, showed them off by the elegance of his shoes and the tightness of his small clothes. His figure had been admirable; but the flesh which he put on in his devout days was beginning to mar the perfection of his contours. He became even too fat; and, as Monsieur was tall, the fat gave rise to the following jest: 'There has been a mistake made either by the father or the mother; one of the two brothers has received what was destined for the other.'"

"I hope at least," said Madame de Maintenon, "that there is no allusion to religion."

He was not very careful about his adornment, but although his inward man was of an incredible uncleanliness, it did not appear upon his person. Monsieur had the same habits; it was a relic of their neglected childhood, when they were abandoned to the care of valets. The King thought nothing of keeping some fine greyhounds in his bed-chamber, which he liked to feed with his own hand; their excrement soiled the floor and furniture, without his taking notice of such disagreeables; he had always ten or twelve of them distributed about his cabinets, which resembled stables more than anything else.

Louis XIV, like his brother and his sons, was a rude eater—a glutton rather than an epicure; Gargantua might have been jealous of him: that is why the state dinner was extremely rare. He dined alone in his room, at a square table facing the window; he ordered in the morning a very small cover, always composed of a great number of dishes, and three courses besides dessert. Ordinarily, but few people were present during the dinner; and I have several times assisted at it with the Duc de Chartres, who remained standing, according to the etiquette, to which Monsieur, Monseigneur, and the Princes also conformed. The King maintained a well-employed silence; for I have seen him eat, at one meal, four plates of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, two salads, some roast mutton and garlic, two large slices of ham,

pastry, fruit, and confections. He never drank wine but mixed with water, and with sobriety. The high-chamberlain, or, in his absence, the first gentleman of the chamber, served the King, who made a disagreeable noise with his tongue and teeth while he ate. His greatest delight was hard-boiled eggs.

He had a mania for etiquette, which descended to the minutest things, and subjected the Court to a brilliant slavery. They relate many incidents, which have been confirmed to me by eye-witnesses, and which are not to the honour of the gentleness and urbanity people have been pleased to ascribe to him. On rising from a state dinner at Marly, he observed a valet, who, whilst clearing the table, picked up a biscuit and put it in his pocket. At the same moment, his cane and hat were brought to him, and, in sight of the ladies and gentlemen, whom he hustled to right and left to make a passage for him, he threw himself on the gluttonous thief, abused him, struck him, and broke the stick over his shoulders.

"It was only a twig," he said, as a form of excuse for his brutality.

The amusing side of this adventure is that the King, who held oaths in horror, so much so that he punished them in others severely, gave vent to those of every hue on this occasion. I imagine that the Père La Chaise did not let him want absolution.

The King derived pleasure from a thousand petty tyrannies, which seem to me far beneath the dignity of a great monarch. He was vexed to see that the ladies of the Court did not put on full dress for the play. Two words from him put toilettes in the fashion, and soon its omission was no longer permitted at gatherings where he was present. All this passed before I had been presented, for Madame de Maintenon had changed diversions for matters of religion. The horizon of the Court had grown sombre, and elegance of manners, gallantry, and merry-making were gone.

No one has ever defended the selfishness which was a second nature with Louis XIV. This selfishness, which ruling had developed, was apparent in his least actions. I know nothing which reveals it more than his journeys. His carriage was encumbered with women, his mistresses or his bastards; he needed bosoms and petticoats to look at. Sometimes Madame, whose German outbursts amused him when in a good temper, had a

place in the carriage, in which Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse was always established. But what torments the victims of the King's choice endured without complaining! As he liked air, he kept the windows lowered, and would not agree to have the curtain drawn to keep off sun, wind, rain, or cold. The ladies, abandoned to all the excesses of the season, thought themselves fortunate when the dust did not devour them. This was not all. The King, who took pleasure in seeing people eat with a good appetite, was careful to furnish his carriage with meat, fruit, and pastry; every moment he would invite his travelling companions to do honour to his provisions, and those who were not hungry, or who ate reluctantly, incurred his disgrace, and often mighty bitter words. Unfortunately, stomachs and bowels revolted against this treatment; a host of inconveniences resulted from this, which might have roused a laugh in any other society.

Madame de Chevreuse related that, on a journey to Fontainebleau, she was seized with a colic, which was intensified by the dinner, the constraint, and two hours' travelling; she could hardly put her foot to the ground without an accident. When the carriage arrived at its destination, she had barely time to implore the Duc de Beauvilliers to accompany her. They crossed the courtyard to the chapel, where a low mass was being said; the door was open, and the fair traveller deposited her burden, whilst the worthy duke made her a stout rampart with his body. Those who came afterwards did not suspect that a duchess had passed by. As for the King, if he found himself in a similar critical position, he did not even take the precaution of the Duc de Beauvilliers; he was contented to descend from his carriage, but the ladies were not compelled to look.

Madame de Maintenon had much to suffer from the egoist. Sick or well, and ladies are not always in the latter condition, she had to follow the King wherever he went, and it was partly to this painful exactitude that she owed her high fortune. She had finished by obtaining leave to travel separately, under pretext of modesty; but she never found a pretext for escaping from what the King desired of her at his ordinary hours. Louis XIV, who was genuinely attached to her, was not concerned for her health so long as he was satisfied. He could not dispense with air, and when he entered Madame de Maintenon's chamber, had she the fever even, he began by opening all the windows until ten

o'clock at night; he never inquired even whether the freshness of the night incommoded her; it was not his business, since he himself felt well. Madame de Maintenon endured all in silence. *Such is our good pleasure*, was the device of Louis XIV.

He was doubly fond of women, from caprice and from temperament; his gallantry was less set upon amorous preliminaries than on the rest. He was not satisfied if he did not come at once to the end of a passion which lasted as long as it could. When nature spoke, he showed no daintiness; anything was food to him, provided it was a woman—peasants, servants, ladies of quality, and a thousand others. He had only the embarrassment of choosing; they threw themselves at his head, and he did not take as much as was offered him. In spite of his daily passions, he had certain serious ones which subjugated him for years. He let himself be loved (according to the expression of Madame de Cornuel, so prodigal of epigrams) by Mademoiselle de La Vallière, who loved him with heart-felt devotion; by Madame de Montespan, who loved him from ambition; by Madame de Soubise from interest; and by Madame de Maintenon from a mixture of both motives.

The King's love for Madame Henriette, Monsieur's first wife, had a strange pretext, which betrays the Jesuit a league off. He pretended that if his brother had spare time, he would win the affection of the Court and town, and that thus, by exciting his jealousy, he was providing him with occupation; this was to cover adultery with reasons of state. Monsieur, philosophical as he was in his tastes, had the mania of disapproving those of his wife. Monsieur made no scruple of sacrificing Madame to the Chevalier de Lorraine, and was astonished that she made up with others for the neglect in which he left her. The Comte de Guiche and the Duke of Monmouth had not a long reign. That of Louis XIV, in which love was blended with politics, lasted until Madame's death, without prejudice to the passing gallantries she never denied herself. However, ashamed at the morals of Monsieur, who was reviving the mignons of Henri III, she resolved to banish the Chevalier de Lorraine, who had said audaciously: "Ladies, imitate us on your side, and the world will come to an end."

She asked for the exile of this perverse one, and the King hastened to grant it her. Monsieur wept, begged, implored,

swooned; the King was inflexible. The Chevalier departed to Italy, which seemed a country expressly made for him.

Madame, without being beautiful, had that grace which my friend, La Fontaine, calls fairer than beauty. She was young, lively, and fresh; her wit was a further seduction; and, as her virtue was not on the most solid of foundations, it was a question as to who should have his share. The King ended by loving her tenderly; he confided the most important secrets of the government to her, thought highly of her counsels, and even sent her to England to treat of the interests of the two kingdoms. Monsieur, jealous of this favour, said: "I should not be surprised if my wife were made a minister of France."

Meanwhile, Beuvron and the Marquis d'Effiat, particular friends of the Chevalier de Lorraine, suffered his absence impatiently; it seemed as though it would not cease until the death of Madame. It was for this they busied themselves. The Chevalier sent a poison from Italy. We know that in that country the use of poison is as common as that of bread. D'Effiat undertook to utilise it.

Madame was then at Saint-Cloud, to pass the time of the summer heat. Her physicians had ordered her chicory-water to cool the ardour of the blood. She drank but one glass morning and evening. A porcelain pot, containing the chicory-water, was kept in a cupboard in a little vestibule of Madame's apartment; by the side of the pot was the cup, which was used by Madame only. With diabolic invention, d'Effiat seized the moment when no one saw him to steal into the passage, open the cupboard, take the cup and rub its sides with a paper. A *valet-de-chambre* came in and surprised d'Effiat during this operation.

"What are you doing there, Monsieur?" he asked, "and why are you touching Madame's cup?"

"My friend," answered d'Effiat, showing no confusion, "I was very thirsty, I wished to drink, and, as this cup seemed to me dirty, I was wiping it with paper, having no serviette."

The valet was satisfied with this excuse, put the cup back in its place, and poured out some drink in another. D'Effiat having drunk, withdrew. In the afternoon Madame had her cup full of chicory-water brought her.

"I am poisoned," she said, handing it back empty to some-

one, who upset it to remove the traces of poison. "Help! I am dead!"

"Madame, is it possible?" cried d'Effiat; "do not make such a terrible mistake."

He asked for the pot of chicory-water, which he tasted, saying: "You see, gentlemen."

Those who were present, encouraged by this example, imitated him.

However, Madame's pains increased each moment. She threw herself on her bed with cries and fearful contortions. The physicians hurried in; their art was spent in conjectures, then in useless remedies. They lost much time, examined the chicory-water and the cup, which was in the cupboard, clean and purified. The sickness grew worse. Madame received the last sacraments, and at about three o'clock of the morning, expired, burnt internally as though with red-hot pincers.[1]

Monsieur put on a fine countenance of affliction. The King, who was in bed, rose at this terrible news, sent for Brissac, Captain of the Guards, and ordered him to bring Purnon, the first major-domo of Madame, before him, suspecting him, on more grounds than one, to be at any rate in the secret. This Purnon, a friend of the Chevalier de Lorraine and the Marquis d'Effiat since their childhood, possessed wit, but even more malignity than wit. He was a man without faith or law, a thief and a liar, an atheist, and a man of bad morals. At the moment of his death he sent God and his confessor to all the devils. "My good man," said he, "leave this carcase; it smells ill already, and the prettiest boy in the world could not revive it." He was brought into the King's chamber, bound hand and foot. He thought it was all over with him; but Louis XIV had dried his tears, and, with a face inflamed with anger, commanded them to leave him alone with Purnon, who was more dead than alive.

"Wretched man," he cried, "tell the truth, and I promise to spare your life; if not, you are lost. Has Madame been poisoned?"

"Yes, Sire," answered Purnon, trembling in every limb.

"Since you are aware of the crime, you should know its author."

[1] This anecdote is confirmed by the correspondence of Madame.—[Editor.]

"Sire, the Chevalier de Lorraine sent me the poison from Italy in a case of oranges. I gave it to d' Effiat, who made use of it."

"And my brother," went on the King after a moment's silence, with a sombre look, "did he know of all this?"

"No, Sire."

"Remember that your life or death depends on the answer to this question. Did he know it?"

"Sire, I swear to you he did not. D' Effiat wrote to the Chevalier de Lorraine that Monsieur, irritated at Madame's gallantries, would perhaps be relieved if she was done away with by some means or other; but the Chevalier answered by letter that care must be taken to say nothing to Monsieur, who would not be able to hold his tongue, and that if he did not speak for the first year, he would get us hanged ten years later."

"Ah," replied the King, carrying his hand to his eyes, "I am relieved; you will retire."

Brissac escorted Purnon back in liberty, and, strange to relate, the matter rested there. Certain suspicions were secretly circulated. D' Effiat and Beuvron were not molested, and Purnon did not sell his post as Monsieur's major-domo until long afterwards. I presume that the King arrested the course of justice, because he feared lest Madame's gallantries should be revealed, and trouble his brother's peace. Monsieur was made to believe that the Dutch had administered to Madame a slow poison, which had not produced an effect until her return to France. Nevertheless, the Chevalier de Lorraine was recalled, and the welcome he received from Monsieur enabled people to believe what they liked.

During the Queen's lifetime, the King never once failed to sleep in her bed; only he slept there with a profound slumber, and the Queen, whose Spanish temperament was not accustomed to such manners, could perceive that he had been fatigued elsewhere. She uttered gentle reproaches to him, to which he had nothing to reply, except that the profession of a king was a hard one. In other respects, Louis XIV showed her consideration in lieu of love, and caused her to be respected; for he loved her, he said, on account of her virtues. Every day, however, after dinner, he visited his mistresses, and lay with them, when the fancy seized him. He thus prepared himself to sleep all

the following night. Madame de Montespan had encouraged him in this habit, and, as then he did not sleep, their conversation touched upon a thousand matters—politics and affairs of state being especially in question.

During the lifetime of the Queen, Louis XIV had time to grow weary of mistresses who offered him no more than beauty and pleasure. Madame de Montespan, with her indomitable pride, her passion for governing all things, finished by disgusting him with these illegitimate connexions which caused him so many vexations. It was she who presented Madame de Maintenon to her lover, not suspecting that this woman, less beautiful and older than herself, would become a dangerous and preferred rival. The widow of Scarron showed a master-mind in the conduct of this intrigue. The King, who at first could not endure the sight of her, finished by finding her indispensable. The Queen had said on her deathbed: "I pray God that the King will separate from the Montespan, with whom he is damning his soul."

I shall not be persuaded that these words were not inspired by the Père La Chaise, the interested confidant of Madame de Maintenon. Louis XIV, who looked upon them as the warning of heaven, made them serve as an excuse for the antipathy he began to conceive towards the Montespan. The latter, who has been accused of poisoning Mademoiselle de Fontanges, and others, was not behindhand in malevolence. She conceived the plan of sending the King, from Italy, an horoscope, foretelling that, towards the end of his life, he would love an old strumpet. The terms were even more bitter, and Madame de Maintenon wittily turned them against her rival. The laughers were on her side. It was at this epoch that Madame de Montespan rang the knell of her defeat by retiring; and, as though she too wished to profit by the Maintenon's lessons, she threw herself into religion, like La Vallière, under the pretext that she would sooner love God than nobody. The King, on his return from Versailles, found Madame de Maintenon more subtle and more devout than ever; he let himself be caught by her prudery, and ended the comedy by marrying this old, kept woman, all out of penitence.

Many people believe, even to-day, that this marriage is a mere fable, invented by the friends of the Maintenon; but

Montchevreuil, who was a witness of it, has related to me all the particulars. Madame de Maintenon, whilst passing from hand to hand, had retained an appetising plumpness, by which the King, ravenous after an abstinence of several months, let himself be tempted. But whatever efforts he made against the lady's virtue they were only met with refusals, which made the stings of the flesh acuter. Madame de Maintenon overthrew his scruples with the Bible and the four evangelists; the Père La Chaise *jesuitised* to his utmost; Villarceaux, who knew the particulars of the widow's charms, inflamed the King's imagination with them; M. de Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, played his part in the comedy, whose Scapin was Bontemps, Governor of Versailles, *valet-de-chambre* and procuror, won over at the cost of money and promises; Madame de Maintenon gained the Marquis de Louvois to her party by first admitting him to her bed. Finally, in mid-winter, on a starless night—as though it were in mourning for this incongruous union—Bontemps went to fetch the bride, and conducted her to one of the King's closets, in which were assembled Louis XIV, the Père La Chaise, M. de Harlay, Louvois, and Montchevreuil. An altar had been prepared; the dimly-lit apartment did not allow perception of all that was depicted on those silent faces; the King wore an air of gloom, and, happening to raise his eyes to a portrait of the dead Queen, which they had forgotten to remove, he lowered them, full of tears; the Maintenon, on the other hand, advanced with a triumphal air, which was shared by her creatures. Mass was said by the King's confessor, and served by Bontemps. When the Père La Chaise asked Madame de Maintenon if she consented to take His Majesty for her husband, she interrupted him with a *yes*, uttered in a clear and ringing voice; before replying to a like question, Louis XIV hesitated for a few moments, and no one heard the ashamed *yes* he murmured. The ceremony being completed, they passed the night together. Louvois whispered in the bride's ear:

"My cousin, I see you Queen of France!"

"Not yet," she replied.

The report of this secret marriage was not slow to transpire at Court, and Madame de Maintenon did nothing to refute it.

CHAPTER X

DEATH OF THE DUC DE LA VIEUVILLE—THE NEW GOVERNOR—MADEMOISELLE, DUCHESSE DE MONTPENSIER — THE CARMELITES OF THE RUE BOULOY—ILLNESS OF MADEMOISELLE—THE KING'S ANGER—THE DUC DE CHARTRES' EXTRAVAGANT PROJECT—THE DISGUISE—THE PRINCE AND DUBOIS IN THE PARLOUR — MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE — MADAME DE MONTESPAN — THE KING AT THE CARMELITES — THE DUC DE CHARTRES REVEALS HIMSELF TO LA VALLIÈRE—ESCAPE FROM THE CONVENT—THE DUC'S REGRETS

M. DE LA VIEUVILLE died on the 2nd of February 1689; we might easily have failed to notice it, for the title of governor was the extent of his office; he hardly saw his pupil twice a week, and he did not speak four words to him. He was the third to succumb in the Prince's education; Messieurs de Navailles, d'Estrades, and de La Vieuville succeeded one another at intervals of two years, as though the post were an untenable one. The last, indeed, who had just been nominated Chevalier of the King's Orders, only enjoyed the honour a month; he was little regretted, and little deserved to be. I have never seen a sorrier gentleman—a cuckold, and laughed at to his face; ignorant and proud, puffed up with his ancestors and his own importance.

"This education," he said on his death-bed, "is a snare; everybody dies. I fear lest, after me, they find no titled gentlemen to undertake it."

Indeed, this education was like the bride of Tobias, whom one could not approach and live. There was something astounding, at the first glance, in this mortality, which, at bottom, was natural enough, since it fell upon old men between the age of seventy and eighty. For my part, I conceived no apprehension; for I am not superstitious. It seemed to me, on the contrary, that Providence was working for me. The Duc de Chartres was in hopes that he would have no other governor beside myself, who rendered life agreeable to him, carrying on at once the education

of his temperament and of his mind. It was enough for him, moreover, once to have tasted liberty, to hold servitude in horror.

"Dubois," he said to me, on learning the death of Monsieur de La Vieuville, "if you were a sorcerer, I should believe this death, as well as some others, to be your work."

"Monseigneur," I answered, "I know too well what pleasure there is in life to deprive even my greatest foe of it."

"In any case, let us arrange that governors do not grow like hydra-heads. Thanks to you, I have no page."

We were both vexed alike to learn that the Marquis d'Arcy had accepted the dangerous inheritance of the Duc de La Vieuville. This marquis, who had risen from an obscure gentleman by dint of painting people of quality, had become so as an indifferent matter; he had employed his life in embassies and services. He was a distinguished man of war, and I have had the proofs of his valour beneath my own eyes. The nobility and dignity of his manners pleased the Duc de Chartres at first; but as soon as he sought to inaugurate his authority, the Prince, who had the appearance of a man, all beardless as he was, sought him out under my advice, and said to him with energy:

"Monsieur, if you wish us to remain good friends, you will concern yourself, in no way, with my conduct in private; in public, as much as you will. I am of age to have no more pedagogues, and I want none; if this arrangement suits you, I promise you all my friendship."

The Marquis d'Arcy did not make him repeat himself, and seeing it was a deliberate line of action, he did as the Prince wished.

It was about this period that I lent myself to an imprudence which had like to cost me dear; had not my star protected me, I should have been lost without resource. This singular piece of rashness reveals the capriciousness of the great, and the weakness of those who are complacent to them. I cannot recall it without looking upon it as a dream.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier who, after having failed to make a number of marriages, and having conducted a number of intrigues, was secretly married to M. de Lauzun, was deserted by him, when, by dint of many sacrifices, she had obtained his release from prison, after a detention of ten years at Pignerol;

she consoled herself in religion for the love-sorrows which were no longer congruous with her age. This was a conversion which must have cost her many a tear, for she loved pleasure beyond all things. She condemned herself to the *régime* of priests, masses, and hair-shrouds, which did not prevent her from putting on rouge; her health being feeble, instead of having recourse to the doctors, she surrounded herself with relics which failed to cure her. Following her confessor's advice, she sought her cures from the Carmelites of the Rue de Bouloy, who were famous. Mademoiselle de La Vallière had taken the veil, and adopted the name of Louise, Sœur de la Miséricorde. These Carmelites were not merely occupied with the preparation of potions and blessed pills, accompanied with indulgences; they insinuated themselves into politics, and in the Queen's lifetime had professed to play a part in the affairs of the Court. I believe they took the side of Madame de Montespan against Madame de Maintenon. The King, who felt sore at the efforts they had made to attract Mademoiselle de La Vallière to them, threatened to close their convent. This threat did not prevent them from a concern in worldly matters, and they continued to receive the best persons at Court, both men and women. All the show of austerity, of which they made a parade, was a deception, and concerts and banquets stood them in stead of penitence. The fashion of visiting them, bringing them presents, and of consulting them as oracles, gave them an importance which they increased with all their might; and often sermons attracted a mighty company, toilettes, and hubbub into their church. Their reputation was in such bad odour that it was stated openly that they only pronounced three vows—pride, interest, and hatred. Mademoiselle de La Vallière, displeased at having entered such a nest of intrigue, had no part in their lax conduct, and scarcely left her cell. The King had not been once to see her, as the Carmelites had hoped, in order that their house might be thrown into relief; and only at the time of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Blois with the Prince de Conti, he had sent his congratulations to the mother, who had replied: "God have mercy upon her!" Sorrow had made her truly a saint.

Mademoiselle, therefore, went to *en-Carmelite* herself. She told her troubles to the superior, who presented her with a

potion from her pharmacy. The Duchesse de Montpensier would have died if she had emptied the phial to the last drop, and, indisposed as she was, it made her dangerously ill. Whether she had omitted some sign of the cross, or that the superior had made a mistake in the bottle, the remedy produced colics and alarming vomiting. The King was informed of it at a moment when he was in a mighty ill-temper; all the Court was there, the Duc de Chartres as well.

"The devil take the Carmelites," cried the King, in a voice like thunder: "I was well aware they were intriguers, slanderers, huckstresses, and plagues that shame religion, but I did not know they were poisoners; I will have them driven from France!"

These terrible words led to no result, for the whole of Christendom stood between the King and the Carmelites, who escaped with abuse. This scene gave rise to the most extreme piece of insolence on the part of the Duc de Chartres, who made me his accomplice in spite of myself.

"Dubois," said he to me, seizing my hands, "there is need of courage—great courage!"

"You alarm me, Monseigneur."

"Listen, you shall scold me afterwards, if you have leisure; but for some days past I have been devising a scheme which might cost you a hanging."

"Then, Monseigneur, postpone it as long as may be possible; I feel in no humour to risk my neck gaily."

"Do you think nothing of the fact of being agreeable to me? I am imprudent, mad, extravagant; no matter, I shall have time later to do penitence for my follies."

"And I, naturally, am to be the scapegoat to bear the weight of Monseigneur's iniquities. I can guess that it is a matter of some abduction."

"No. I have so often heard talk of the beautiful Duchesse de la Vallière. . . ."

"Gracious Heaven! Do you remember that she is a Carmelite, and fifty years old?"

"Are you afraid of my falling in love with her?"

"Faith! I think you capable of many things. To be brief, what do you want of Mademoiselle de La Vallière, or rather of the Sœur de la Miséricorde?"

"I want to see her, and hear her. I have been told that she is still divinely lovely, and then, they relate wonders of the Carmelites; they are charming girls, with nothing severe about them but their habits."

"Well, like all the Court, you can go there to seek for prayers and recipes; but I will set myself down a rogue, if you find any *ingénue* there who has escaped the courtiers."

"Fie! a pretty pleasure to look at women through an iron grating! Look now at the means I have devised: I disguise myself as a girl of quality; I have no fear that my face will betray me, or that I show myself a man in any respect. Thus my masquerade will succeed. I present myself with you at the convent; you are a venerable priest, confessor, converter; I trust to you to make yourself what you are not; it is you who have shown me the path of grace; and I desire, against my parents' wishes, to become a nun."

"And if you are taken at your word."

"I will undertake the rest; I am certain that the Carmelites will receive me with open arms, for I will give myself out to be of a great family, rich and noble."

"But consider the danger!"

"It is what I consider the least; besides, I have not waited for your advice, and Purel has procured me a woman's dress, which I have tried on; I vow to you my own father would not recognise me in such a travesty."

I was not strong enough to maintain my opinion against that of the Prince; I feigned a pedagogue's anger with a litany of oaths. Nothing mattered; the Duc de Chartres laughed in my face, and told me calmly that if I would not acompany him, he would even do without my stupid self. I let myself bow to necessity, and, all our measures being taken, all our plans fixed, we started for Saint-Cloud, in the sight and hearing of all. But towards the evening Purel and Laurent were charged to conceal our absence, and we returned to Paris in a hackney-coach. We were set down in the Rue de Bouloy, and encouraged one another to play our parts skilfully. The Prince, beneath his elegant robes, had the air of an heiress; the tall head-dress he wore did not spoil his handsome face, which might have excited envy in the sex he imitated. His eyes would have enslaved many a heart, and I vowed to him, under my breath, that I, who knew

the reality of things, felt myself almost amorous. For myself, I had taken for livery a perfectly new cassock. It was eight o'clock of the evening when we were introduced into the parlour, which we fortunately found empty. We were announced to the Sœur Thérèse, Abbess of the Convent, and while they were gone to tell her, a fat Abbé entered, humming an air. I recognised Chaulieu, who clasped me in his arms with demonstrations of friendship; he would have spared me had he been sober.

"It is you, my dear Abbé," said he; "I congratulate you on having made a master epicurean of our Prince. I am told that the little rogue will outstrip father and mother."

"Ah! and what are you doing at the Carmelites?" I resumed abruptly, to turn the conversation.

"And yourself, my dear son? As for me, I have come on a visit to an ancient sin—a former mistress, who has preferred God to me."

"Yes," said I; "but I have met the Marquis de La Fare, who is looking for you."

"I have just left the table with him. The devil! What Carmelite is that?"

"I swear the Marquis is waiting for you at the Chevalier's."

"To be sure, I had forgotten it. Between ourselves, the wine was marvellous. Adieu, Abbé."

I saw the inopportune fellow depart with inexpressible joy; and, for fear lest he should return, I shut the door when the superior arrived. She was a somewhat mature beauty, a coquette still under her robe of wool, smiling and accustomed to the world.

"My dear sister," said the Prince (whilst I was trembling lest he should betray us with the first word), "you see a poor sinner who comes to throw herself into your arms. I am Mademoiselle Charlotte ——" (I forget what great name he added to that of Charlotte) "my family is powerful, and its wealth is not inferior to its nobility. They seek to marry me against my will, and are opposed to my vocation, which tells me to shut myself in the cloister. My parents fear to see my fortune scattered in alms and donations. At last, as I had no more hope of escaping from this union, which I dread more than death, encouraged by my worthy confessor, who has deigned to accompany me in my flight, I come to crave asylum and your protection."

This fable was related in a tone so sweet, and with such naive simplicity, that the Abbess made us both pass into the interior of

the convent. In doing this, she was acting in the interest of her order. The retreat of Mademoiselle Charlotte de —— could not fail to create a mighty talk. My entrance to the convent had nothing remarkable about it, and the pretext I gave of confirming my penitent in her projects, gave me the right of residence amongst the Lord's handmaids. However, I was far from feeling reassured; and, for the first time in my life, did not think to profit by the good things chance brought to my door. I was shut up during the night in a chamber, where I hardly slept at all. The Prince was more fortunate; the Sœur Sainte-Thérèse had already taken an affection for him, and I would not dare assert that he slept any better than I. On the morrow, I was delivered, and received permission to walk with Mademoiselle Charlotte in the garden.

"Ah! Dubois," said the Prince, "how full of delight is this contemplative life! I would I could change my sex, and never leave this home of peace and happiness."

"In truth," I answered, "if you were a Carmelite for good, you would think differently."

"No matter; these moments are the finest of my existence. I have seen Mademoiselle de La Vallière; I have spoken with her."

"Would you believe, Monseigneur, they locked me up all night in my cell?"

"Dubois, I know nothing more noble, more majestic than this angel of sweetness and goodness! How could the King, who loved her, love her no more? What barbarity to let her bury herself alive! She has already an affection for me; I cannot express all the divinity in her accent."

"But she is no longer young."

"What do I know! She seems so, and I have forgotten her age since I have seen her."

"Monseigneur, you choose your time badly to fall in love."

"I am not; but I bear the King a grudge for having rewarded such love with such infidelity. Alas! from the emotion she shows at his name, I do not believe she is cured of that love."

A Carmelite with an imposing carriage, though she was slightly lame, advanced towards us.

"It is she," said the Prince, with a blush, and he went to meet her. I did not follow him; but I admired, at a distance, those blue eyes, that gentle expression, and that perfect form, which

the years had respected. I did not disturb an interview which the Duc de Chartres has never revealed to me. Suddenly, I heard Sœur de la Miséricorde say in a moved voice: "There is Madame de Montespan!"

These words made me shudder, and Mademoiselle Charlotte seemed equally ill at ease. A lady, dressed in black, had just entered the garden with a priest; she passed so near me that I had time to contemplate her face to face; it was a triumphant beauty, and her eyes, her lips, her complexion might still pass as admirable—one would have said a queen, to see her walk, her head raised high, and with an air of deliberation. She was not very tall, however, and I think she had lost flesh with her penances and her journeyings to Bourbon and Fontevrault, for I recognised nothing of that plumpness which had been so vaunted to me. There was an irony in her expression, a pride in her person, a hardness in her voice, which had not changed, in spite of the change in her position. Her piercing gaze forced me to lower my eyes. I felt relieved, and breathed more freely when I saw she had not deigned to pay any attention to me. I was roused from my preoccupation by a voice which I did not know. It was the Père Latour, the same who is still superior-general of the Oratory, then confessor of Madame de Montespan, who addressed me with benevolence:

"It is you, Monsieur," he said, "who have brought Mademoiselle Charlotte de ——?"

I answered in the affirmative; he put me a host of questions, which I eluded as far as possible, and I succeeded, not without difficulty, in turning the conversation to Madame de Montespan.

"Monsieur," he said to me, with an air of satisfaction, "I venture to say that this conversion does me honour, and I have not yet arrived at the point to which I would bring it. I have bent that soul of steel beneath the yoke of penitence, and now profound humility has succeeded to pride."

"Appearances are deceitful," said I, watching the haughty manners of this lady, who was speaking to Mademoiselle Charlotte.

"I have persuaded her," he continued, "to write to her husband, to ask his pardon and to place herself in his hands."

"What did Monsieur de Montespan reply?" I asked.

"That he would neither receive her, nor hear her spoken of

during his life. After this sacrifice of her self-esteem, she has perfected herself in piety; she gives all she has to the poor; she works with her hands at coarse work, at linen for women who lie in, at shifts for the sick; she forgets herself in order to occupy herself only with her neighbour; her table is only notable for its frugality; she fasts every other day, and her prayers are repeated hourly."

"Poor lady!" I cried, "she is still strangely beautiful!"

"You do not know the lacerations she practises on that body whose charms were once so disastrous for her. Beneath her clothes she wears shifts of the roughest cloth; her skin is ceaselessly torn by garters, armlets, and girdles, with spikes of iron."

I did not reply; I was indignant at these cruelties.

"The sinner will become a saint," he added, "and I have promised her Paradise in recompense. However, in spite of that, you would not believe the fear she has of death, which will be her eternal salvation. At night she lies with her curtains open, surrounded by hundreds of candles, and as she is accustomed to awake every moment with a start, she has women who watch round her bed, who eat and play; but for that she would think herself already in her grave."

The sentiment of disgust inspired in me by this form of penitence was at its height. I looked then at the man who spoke to me; his was the churchman's face, which one sees so frequently—red, puffy, with small bright eyes and a smile of happiness. He left me to rejoin Madame de Montespan, who had just separated from Mademoiselle de La Vallière. I ventured to draw near the Duc de Chartres, who had not lost countenance as Mademoiselle Charlotte; I approached him just at the moment when Mademoiselle de La Vallière was saying with bitterness:

"Why is it that this arrogant woman pursues me, even in my retreat, as though I were still her rival?"

"Madame," said the Duc de Chartres, looking at her tenderly, "Madame de Montespan is not so beautiful as I had heard."

"She is very beautiful," she answered with indifference, "but she is not good."

"Madame," said I, joining in the conversation, "some important motive must have brought Madame de Montespan here."

"None, unless it be to see with her own eyes if my austerities have greatly aged me; she is consoled for her own misfortune by what she calls mine, although I have never been more happy than now."

"The Père Latour," I remarked, "has nevertheless assured me, that she was converted, and lived like a saint."

"Her tongue," she said sadly, "has not participated in the reformation; you heard, Mademoiselle Charlotte, the mockery she made of my habit and my face."

"She treated Sœur de la Miséricorde," said the Prince, "as she might have treated Mademoiselle de La Vallière in the full glamour of her favour."

"I suspect," I added, "that all these devout appearances are no more than arms against Madame de Maintenon, in order to win back the King once more."

"You have guessed," she answered with a smile; "and I could better explain her visit if His Majesty were to come to the Carmelites to-day."

"The King! To-day!" cried Mademoiselle Charlotte, turning pale.

"At least, it was said so yesterday, and although he has not honoured me with a recollection in the thirteen years since I took the veil, I should be little astonished if he did not remember the Carmelites, if only to acquaint them with his resentment."

"Indeed," I resumed quickly, "after the illness of Mademoiselle."

"Alas!" said Mademoiselle de La Vallière, "men are so evil; the bars of a cloister cannot always guard us from calumny."

"And if the King were to come, Madame!" said the Duc de Chartres.

"No, no; I would not see him. I cannot, I will not; it is an inviolable oath."

Talking, we had come to the entrance to the cloisters, when a noise resounded through the whole convent: "The King! The King!" The sisters, repeating this name, ran to the parlours. We noticed that Madame de Montespan was not the last to rush to the side where the tumult was thickest.

"Let us flee!" cried Mademoiselle de La Vallière. "Do not desert me; I feel too weak. The sight of him would bring back all the past."

"The King!" I cried, in terror. "What will become of us!"

"Madame—a word," said the Duc de Chartres, clasping his hands. "Have mercy on us; save two imprudent——"

"What do I hear?" she interrupted. "Are you not . . .?"

"Mercy, Madame," he said, in a low voice.

"Who are you, then?" she asked, hesitating.

"The Duc de Chartres."

She made a silent gesture of surprise, lifted her eyes to Heaven, and led us to her cell, where she shut us up. She herself, no doubt, went to prostrate herself in the chapel, to seek in religion the strength which failed her. But her fears and ours were happily dissipated. The King's carriage passed before the convent, and stopped; Monsieur descended from it, bitterly reproached the Abbess on behalf of His Majesty, and left her with threats which vexed the Carmelites mightily. Mademoiselle de la Vallière came herself to set us free from the prison in which she had put us, without thinking of what there might be equivocal in the protracted *tête-à-tête* of Mademoiselle Charlotte and myself. But from the moment that she knew the Prince's secret, she affected to have no further communication with him; her eyes, however, had not succeeded in assuming a severe expression.

"Monseigneur," she said to the Duc de Chartres, "I leave it to your conscience to condemn the levity of your conduct, the consequences of which you doubtlesss did not contemplate. The poor Carmelites have enemies enough to lay hold of this adventure and turn it to their disadvantage, in spite of their being utterly innocent of your culpable attempt. I regret that Monsieur, who has not, like you, the excuse of youth, should have lent himself to this ruse. I do not think you had dared to continue it longer. Since you have confided your secret to me, I am permitted to furnish you with the means of leaving here, recommending you secrecy in my turn."

We followed her in silence to a door, which she opened for us. The Duc de Chartres kissed her hand, which she did not withdraw; and we bade farewell to the Carmelites, not as satisfied as we had hoped to be with the adventure.

Purel and Laurent had concealed our absence so well that no one had perceived it.

The Duc de Chartres talked ceaselessly of the beautiful Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and it required no less than five

or six *grisettes* to diminish his regrets, which I combated with all my might.

"In the King's place," said he, "how I should have loved her!"

"Monseigneur," said I, "for how many days?"

The story of Mademoiselle Charlotte, her entrance and disappearance from the Carmelites, transpired, as all that is scandalous does; slander embroidered it all, and it was talked about even at Court.

CHAPTER XI

THE ROYAL FAMILY IN 1688 — THE GRAND DAUPHIN — HIS TIMIDITY, ECONOMY, AND SENSUALITY — HIS AMOURS — MADEMOISELLE FLEURY—MADEMOISELLE CHOUIN, MARRIED TO MONSEIGNEUR—THE COURT OF MEUDON—THE GRANDE DAUPHINE—THE PERFUMED GLOVES—THE PRINCESSE DE CONTI—THE ALLEGED LETTERS—THE COMTE DE VERMANDOIS —HIS DEBAUCHERY

I MUST not omit to draw a picture of the royal family at the epoch when I was admitted to the Court. I had very few acquaintances in it, and could think of nothing better, in order to pass the time, than to abandon myself to my taste for minute observation; I have even preserved some written notes from that period, wherein the truth too often puts on the allures of satire. I am in a position to rectify them to-day, and, as the majority of the persons whom they concern are dead, I think I can judge them dispassionately from the pinnacle of my experience. I do not know, but only the lie which is written seems to me culpable; moreover, what interest should I have in lying to myself?

The *Grand Dauphin*, known by the title of *Monseigneur*, resembled the Queen in features, in manners the King. He was of medium height, elegant in spite of his stoutness; in the manner of his physiognomy, and in his carriage, there was a certain good-nature. The King, his father, who loved him with his accustomed indifference, said that his son had the look of a German prince. His face was pleasant, although it bore the marks of a kick, given him accidentally by the Prince de Conti, when they were both children. His complexion, tanned and red like a drunkard's, did not go with his hair, of a beautiful blonde colour; his dwarfish, deformed feet were an ill termination to his superb legs. The same disproportion existed in his mind, which had its night and day, sometimes heavy, silly, embarrassed, sometimes express-

ing itself with clearness and nobility. His character had also its ups and downs: to-day his kindness knew no bounds, and it was a pleasure to hear his promises; to-morrow, with consummate naughtiness, he busied himself in vexing those who were dearest to him. These singular contrasts recurred from one moment to another; he was, as it were, two men in one.

The grave and pedantic education, which he had received from Montausier and Bossuet, had made him what he was. Madame de Grignan, who, according to the priest Gobelin, made epigrams even at confession, said of the *Grand Dauphin* that what was good in him came from his preceptors, and the evil came from his nature alone. I would fain believe the contrary. M. de Montausier was of an extreme roughness, which the Court had never subdued. MM. de Meaux and Fléchier, austere by condition, in order to ingratiate themselves with the King, redoubled their severity with their pupil; this had rendered him so timorous that it had been justly said of him, he was the first subject of Louis XIV. He took no heed of the affairs of the Government, because he dared not. Moreover, his indolence and indifference were in excellent harmony with the nullity to which his father had reduced him. I have been assured, however, that this was but a varnish, and that, beneath this contempt of greatness, he concealed a secret ambition. Madame d'Epinoy, who, as the friend of Mademoiselle Chouin, was admitted into the private intimacy of Meudon, has related to me that he would pass whole days in looking at engravings of the ceremonies of the consecration, saying to himself aloud: "Here, they will place the crown on my head. There, they will fasten on my spurs." Certainly, this soliloquy must needs have been founded on the hope of the King's death. In the lifetime of Monseigneur, this device, derived from the father of Philip of Valois, which the event has justified, was applied to him: *Son of a king, father of a king, never a king.* Whence, doubtless, the little intimacy which existed between father and son.

This fear, which presided over all his words, was apparent also in the commonest actions of his life. He groped with his feet as he walked, as though there had been precipices all around him; the smallest pebble made him fear a fall, and his hand was extended at once to seek a support; he rode on horseback

well, but could not endure to gallop; at the chase, as soon as he lost sight of his suite, he halted, in great uneasiness, and called for Casau, who followed him like his shadow. He tried to copy the grand state which distinguished Louis XIV, but his imitation was a mean one, except as regards egoism, which he carried to a barbarous degree. His familiarity with inferiors, valets, stablemen, and petty fellows, was undignified, and his avarice was only economy; for he did not seek money with that greediness which is often remarked in princes; and, although he did not lavish it in handfuls, the King had given him leave to dip freely in his treasury, and he would never take advantage of this permission.

His liking for whatever was sensual never led him into excesses; he loved good cheer with delicacy, and not with brutality; he indulged in it moderately, especially since a terrible indigestion, the result of exceeding, had been like to turn to apoplexy. Had he succeeded his father, he would have been a true King Log. Love was one of his relaxations, but always sensual love, inspired by temperament only. I do not speak of the habit of attachment he had for Mademoiselle Chouin, apart from his gallantries. Mademoiselle Chouin, as everyone knows, finished by secretly wedding him. I doubt if he loved her with his eyes, so easy was he to please. The most vulgar beauties were treated by him as the most divine, provided they arrived at the right season. Ordinarily, he sought his pleasures amongst the ruck of the maids of honour of his wife. Mademoiselle Rambures, and Mademoiselle de la Force, who was subsequently made to marry the young Duroure, were sold to him by Madame de Montchevreuil; and Francine, Lully's son-in-law, who had the opera with Dumont for so long, had the charge of purveying for Monseigneur's closet. Francine himself related to me a secret incident, which fully proves that the Dauphin did not look at his mistress's faces. They had promised him a delicate morsel, and the little person whom he expected arrived under the escort of a wrinkled, pock-marked, and vastly fat old woman. The first closet into which they were introduced was apparently badly lighted; for the Prince opened the door, and seized hold of the one who was nearest his hand. This was the old woman, who made no resistance, not knowing what was expected of her; and the other, amused at the mistake, which would be entirely to her advantage, fell a-laughing. Francine arrived at this juncture.

"Pray, where is Mademoiselle ——?" he asked her.

"Shut up with Monseigneur."

"Why?"

"How do I know? Monseigneur chose her himself."

"Impossible; there is some mistake on his part." Thereupon he began to thump the door, crying: "Monseigneur, you are mistaken; it is not the one."

There was no answer until the Dauphin opened the door and dismissed the ugly creature, triumphant at his preference, which she attributed to her own charms. The door having shut upon her, Francine resumed his cries and protests.

"Monseigneur, here is the other."

"What would you have me do with her?"

"She is charming, and you will be pleased with her."

"I don't want any more; it will be for another time."

Francine withdrew with the two damsels, who had not expected to become rivals.

In spite of this blind impartiality, he loved long and greatly the actress Ransin, whose particular merits were her plumpness and an unexampled docility. The old Maréchal de Noailles, who often invited this actress and received her at his table, in order to pay his court to the Dauphin, dubbed her the lay figure of Monseigneur's penances. The latter, indeed, made her fast and pray, because, said he to Madame, when she reproached him with it, "I am very willing to commit a sin, but not without an indulgence." One day, when he sent her to Choisy, she was hidden in an arbour in the garden, where she stayed until the evening, without either eating or drinking. She bore this enforced fast with patience; at last he came for her himself, bringing a biscuit and preserves. "Mademoiselle," said he, "I have brought you here because it is an ember-day, and you might have eaten meat to your soul's damnation."

He let her leave, half-dead with hunger. The only bastard he had by his mistresses was a daughter by this Ransin, known under the name of Mademoiselle Fleury, educated by the Augustines of Chaillot, and married to a gentleman, through the efforts of the Princesse de Conti. She died in 1716.

Monseigneur's passion for Mademoiselle Chouin has always seemed to me incomprehensible. What charmed him greatly was that prodigious bosom, which he called his *kettledrums*.

Mademoiselle Chouin, who is still alive in retirement, was neither avaricious nor ambitious. The Dauphin only gave her sixteen hundred louis a year; even then he counted them out scrupulously, for fear of giving her one over. When he was about to go and take command of the army in Flanders, he made a will in which Mademoiselle Chouin was not forgotten; but she no sooner knew of his intentions in her favour than she induced him to commit all to the flames. Thus Monseigneur left her nothing at his death, and I do not think she had aught beyond four thousand livres, the revenue of her savings. As to her secret marriage with the Dauphin, the King, who, doubtless, had his reasons for being indulgent to *mésalliances*, connived at it; for he offered Mademoiselle Chouin an apartment at Versailles, and when she kept her court at Meudon, she remained seated in her arm-chair in the presence of the Ducs de Bourgogne and Berri, who only had stools; the Duchesse de Bourgogne, however, only called her *Mademoiselle.* Finally, during a dangerous illness of the Dauphin, she entered alone into his chamber, and passed hours there, seated by his pillow.

He was at open war with Madame de Maintenon, especially after he had opposed the declaration of her marriage with the King. She did not forgive him this; it was she who chose his sons' masters, and even their household; she was jealous that the people of Paris, who hated her, should have a real passion for him; the market-women, indeed, never failed to run after his carriage with a thousand blessings, and to bring him bouquets. Monseigneur, moreover, was too much attached to the Montespan, whose son, d' Antin, was still one of his intimates. The Court of Meudon, but scantily frequented, saw no changes. It was made up of Madame la Duchesse, Madame, and Mademoiselle de Lillebonne, d' Antin, Dangeau, the Maréchal d' Uxelles, the Comte de Roucy, Sainte-Maure and Albergotti. Mademoiselle Chouin played the little queen.

It has been alleged that the Prince's tastes were not confined to women. This reputation, which was given him unjustly, angered him to the last degree. The Chevalier de Lorraine, having ventured to make a joke of it before him, he said to him in anger: "If anyone dared to boast of this infamy in my presence, my contempt would prove to him the extent of my horror at such as he."

He had, however, one of the most singular manias, which the King has often made a reproach to him. As soon as he saw a lady or a young girl preparing to sit down, he would place his fist upon the chair with his thumb extended in the fashion of a syringe. I have seen him behave in this manner to Madame, who, in high astonishment, and red with anger, said aloud:

"Monseigneur, I cannot endure to be touched so; do not do it again, for a blow comes ready to me."

At the epoch at which I am, the Dauphin had his three sons; the Duc de Bourgogne, who foretold what he would be (a mixture of the Duc de Beauvilliers, and of Fénélon, his tutors), the Duc d'Anjou and the Duc de Berri, who were still children. I have a few words to say of their mother, who died two years afterwards, from the sorrows caused her by the Maintenon.

She was very ugly, but her ugliness was not disagreeable. Her mind, though it was spoiled by her Bavarian superstitions, and her politeness, though it was chilled by her childish shyness, made her generally loved. I have been told that she had possessed a pretty figure; but when she was brought to bed of the Duc de Berri, she contracted a deformity, either because Clément, her accoucheur, had accidentally wounded her, or be-because the Princesse de Conti had approached her with perfumed gloves, and that by the advice of Madame de Maintenon. It is possible that the thing so happened; but it would be absurd to see in it any more malevolence than imprudence. The fact is, that an hour before her death, the Dauphine, looking sadly at her youngest son, who was seated on her bed, said these words to him which accuse nobody: "My dear Berri, I love you well; but you do not know what you have cost me!" Nevertheless, I hear on good authority that the story of the perfumed gloves is true; the Princesse de Conti, Madame, and Madame de Maintenon were gathered round the *accouchée.*

The latter cried: "O Lord! which of you ladies has perfume on you? I feel myself fainting."

"It is not I," exclaimed the three ladies in chorus, and none of them would admit it.

I am the more ready to believe that the perfume came from Madame de Maintenon, as she had, as I have said, the habit of embalming herself like a mummy.

The Dauphine had a German waiting-maid, named La Bessola,

who made her life a hell. She was the most wicked creature alive; she had so cunningly obtained her mistress's confidence that it was impossible to unmask her. The Dauphine answered all that was said to her with a view of detaching her from La Bessola:

"Have we not all our weaknesses? Mine is La Bessola."

She confessed that she preferred this wench to her husband.

La Bessola ruled the Dauphine at her will, spied out her least actions, plumbed her most secret thoughts, and betrayed her to the Maintenon, with whom she was leagued by a money interest. In vain did Madame warn the Dauphine of all this intrigue; nothing availed, she was only set more obstinately on her insane love. The Maintenon treated her mighty ill, and ceaselessly threatened to embroil her with the King. She had even circulated a rumour amongst the people that the Dauphine, a Bavarian princess, detested France, and was always suggesting fresh taxes. Whence the proverbial insult: "The Devil or the Dauphine."

Since the latter's death, they have done me the honour of inserting my name in lieu of hers in the proverb.

The two sons whom Louis XIV had by Mademoiselle de La Vallière, died young. Her daughter, Marie-Anne, who wedded the Prince de Conti, is still living. I think that pious practices preserve; look at the freshness of nuns. She was of a perfect beauty, at once noble and interesting; she resembled her mother, except that she lacked that softness of gaze, that angelic smile which I have seen in no other woman, and which has something of heaven about it. The marriage of this beautiful creature was celebrated under the most favourable auspices; the bridal pair loved one another in a pretty fashion, which greatly amused the King; but on their wedding night, a sound of sobs and tears was heard in the bride's chamber, which brought people in; it was asserted that the Princess had been suddenly taken ill. In fact, she kept her room for some days, with convulsions and incredible pains. The couplets which were bandied from mouth to mouth were not to the honour of the husband, whose brother, the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon, made a duty of repairing his omissions. At a Court ball he cried, in admiration of the Princess's wonderful dancing: "They are not feet, but wings."

The Prince de Conti, who knew of the songs which had arisen owing to his brother's attentions to his wife, stamped his foot in fury.

"Good! as though there were not enough for two," said the Chevalier de Lorraine aloud, careless as to whether he was overheard. On the following day, the Prince de Conti struck the Chevalier on the cheek, and asked him to do him the honour of fighting him.

"With pleasure, Monsieur," replied the Chevalier; "send a second to my brother, the Chevalier de Marsan; but not your own brother, I pray you, it would be too bad for Madame la Princesse if he were killed."

A day being fixed, a rendezvous given, the Chevalier, who was not so mad as to draw his sword against a Prince of the Blood, went and told Monsieur everything, who repeated it to the King. The affair was stopped. Shortly afterwards, the two brothers, that calumny might be silenced, started together for the army of Hanover. The Prince de Conti died of the small-pox. The Princess, having been left a childless widow, thought only of her pleasures. M. de Clermont-Chatte, ensign of the Gendarmes of the Guard, a handsome man, tall and well made, was not the last to perceive the good-will the Princess bore him. He was no intriguer, though he had wit, and he was almost a kinsman of M. de Luxembourg. He did not use his amour to promote his fortune, and it is this which lost him; for if he had exploited the empire his mistress had over the King, he would have been in a position to repulse his enemies. He started for the siege of Philipsburg, more in love than ever, and swearing to become even more so during his absence. But the Maintenon, who wished to harm the Chouin, Monseigneur's favourite, and who reproached the Princess with not putting her lot in her hands, devised a diabolical scheme to revenge herself on both at once. She was informed by her people of the amours of the princess and M. de Clermont; she betrayed the secrecy of the post-office therefore, and obtained possession of the correspondence of the two lovers. So far it was an honest piece of treachery; but she conceived the plan of having several letters forged, professing to have been written to M. de Clermont by the Chouin, with that officer's replies. In order that the wickedness might be complete, these letters were filled with insults and abuse of the King and all the Court. It was a skilful plan to embroil at once, Monseigneur with his favourite, the Princess with her lover. These praiseworthy epistles passed into the hands of Louis XIV, who shuddered in

horror of this double intrigue. He sent in the afternoon, in all haste, for his daughter. She arrived, with much emotion, suspecting some storm.

"Madame," he said to her severely, "you see how you have placed your confidence." He showed her first the letters which M. de Clermont had sent her, and which she had not received; she blushed, stammered, and burst into tears. The King handed her the forged letters. She would have easily perceived the writing had been imitated, but her wounded vanity confused her; she was completely the dupe of the conspiracy, and fell into an extreme despair, which her father consoled with soft words, for he had always loved her more than all his daughters. On the following day, the disgrace of the Chouin was known, and the defence she sought to make did not seem probable to anyone. The King undertook to acquaint Monsieur with all the bother. Mademoiselle Chouin withdrew by command to the Abbey of Port-Royal at Paris, whither her friends, Mesdames de Lillebonne, came to console her. The Princess, overwhelmed at such a blow, tried to kill herself by swallowing broken glass; the Maintenon triumphed. The Dauphin, on his return from the taking of Philipsburg, in despair at what had happened, went to see Mademoiselle Chouin in her retreat; she excused herself so well, that he sought information on every side, and, by dint of money, discovered the Maintenon's perfidious intrigue. His father would not have been ready to believe it; he was satisfied, therefore, to confide what he knew to the Princesse de Conti, and Mademoiselle Chouin returned to favour, if not M. de Clermont-Chatte, who had, perhaps, found a successor. Since that time, the Princesse de Conti, as she aged, has quite changed her mode of life, and if she has still any love for anything, it is only for God and her confessor.

This is the place for some details as to the second son of Mademoiselle de La Vallière, the Comte de Vermandois, who died long before my coming to Court. But people have obstinately tried to see in this young Prince, the Man in the Iron Mask. I have reasons for believing they are deceived in this, and that the Comte de Vermandois had never anything in common with that unhappy prisoner. Madame, who, in spite of her horror of the bastards, loved this young Prince like her own son, has often sung his praises to me. He had received an unhealthy education;

but his heart was full of excellent and noble qualities. Impetuous and petulant, he knew of naught but pleasure; and yet his gentle and amiable face recalled, although he had a slight squint, the features of his mother. He was early formed, and at the age of fifteen his figure might have been compared with that of Lauzun. The Chevalier de Lorraine and the Comte de Marsan debauched him after their fashion. The full circumstances of an infamous orgy, where the reception of the Comte de Vermandois into a mysterious society took place, have never been known. The Prince proposed to the Dauphin to accompany him, promising him much pleasure, and concealing from him the character and constitution of this company, composed of the most distinguished young men of the Court. The Dauphin, who was jealous of the Comte de Vermandois' wit, accepted his invitation in order to spy upon his proceedings and report them to the King, whom Madame de Montespan had irritated against this son of Mademoiselle de La Vallière. It seems that the object of this assembly, which met near the Abbaye-aux-Bois, was to form a league against women. It was a sort of revival of the Templars. The Dauphin was exempted from sundry ceremonies and strange oaths which ill befitted a married man; he finished by starting a quarrel with the Comte de Vermandois, whom he insulted. The witnesses of this interposed between them, and both withdrew. The Comte de Vermandois recognised the chair which had brought the Dauphin; he stopped the bearers and cried to the person inside:

"Is it the sword or the cudgel you want?"

M. de Lauzun leapt out of the chair.

"Pardon me," said the Comte, "I thought I was speaking to the Dauphin."

The King was informed of the debauch which the Comte de Vermandois had indulged in. He summoned him, abused him, and recommended him never to show himself in his presence. The Comte swore to have satisfaction for his natural brother's treachery. The latter feared the excesses to which his brother might be carried towards him. Witness the anecdote of the sedan-chair, which Lauzun had related to him before starting for England; he made arrangements, therefore, never to be left alone.

On the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne, Madame vainly

entreated Louis XIV to pardon the Comte de Vermandois, who was very sad and very repentant.

"He has not been punished enough for his crimes," said the King harshly.

In the following year, a sort of reconciliation patched up a good understanding between father and son. It was agreed that the Comte de Vermandois should go to the siege of Courtrai to try his maiden arms. A most brilliant train was given him, and, on the eve of his departure, the Comte encountered Monseigneur in a secluded corner of the park of Versailles.

"Monsieur," he said to him, "we have not arms to settle a difference that is more than a year old; but I venture to hope you will grant me reparation this very day."

"Madman," replied the Dauphin, "do you forget that we are brothers?"

"Brothers! You are the first of my enemies!"

"Since you are the illegitimate son of Mademoiselle de La Vallière. . . ."

"Insolent! I will show you that everything is equal with us."

The Comte de Vermandois administered a blow to his brother, who answered him tranquilly:

"You may do what you like, Monsieur; I will never fight you. Were I to kill you, I should pass for your murderer; if I were killed, you would go to the scaffold."

"I deem myself avenged, Monseigneur, and it is for you now to demand reprisals of me. I shall never refuse you them."

The Dauphin went away in silence.

The Comte de Vermandois left, reached the camp at Courtrai, and fell ill almost immediately. They wrote to the King that he was dead from excessive drinking of brandy.

"I was sure," said the King coldly, "that that *débauché* would come to a bad end."

CHAPTER XII

CHILDREN OF THE KING AND MADAME DE MONTESPAN — THEY ARE LEGITIMATISED—CHARACTER OF THE DUC DU MAINE — THE COMTE DE TOULOUSE — MADEMOISELLE DE NANTES — HER MARRIAGE WITH MONSIEUR LE DUC — CHARACTER OF MONSIEUR LE PRINCE — M. ROSE — THE FOXES AND THE IMITATION OF SAMSON—HIS MISTRESSES—THE DUCHESSE DE LUDE—THE *GRANDE MADEMOISELLE*—HER MARRIAGE WITH M. DE LAUZUN — DESPAIR AFTER HIS ARREST—THE PRICE OF HIS LIBERTY—A GAMBLER'S JEST

Louis XIV had eight children by Madame de Montespan, in her husband's lifetime, and four of them had died in 1688. The first only lived three years, another two. The Comte de Vexin, who was destined to the Church, and who was overwhelmed with benefices from the cradle, succumbed, in his eleventh year, to infirmities which had been his from his birth, and which the physicians' art had only changed into a continual martyrdom. In a few months thirteen cauteries were applied to the dorsal spine. His mother loved experiments and quacks; she preferred to see her son dead rather than deformed like Scarron. This was her reply to Madame de Maintenon, who had reproached her with being the cause of the poor child's sufferings. Mademoiselle de Tours, born with a sickly constitution, did not survive her ninth year. Like her brothers and sisters, she had been acknowledged by the King.

This legitimatisation presented obstacles, besides being quite without precedent. The Marquis de Montespan had counted on the profits of cuckoldom. He was hardened to shame; and when he arrived at Court with his young and beautiful and virtuous wife, he bartered her, in some sort, to the King. Madame de Montespan wished to flee from the dangers she was not strong enough to brave. Her husband, by refusing to take her away, connived at all that happened. The commencement of the King's love delighted him with hopes of exalted

fortune; but as satisfaction to his excessive pretensions was refused, he sought to thwart a passion which he alone had encouraged. Madame de Maintenon was already mistress in title; the husband was threatened; he paid no attention to threats, and let his tongue go loose in reprisal. He was confined in the Bastille, and compelled to hold his peace. From there, thanks to the prayers of his wife, he was sent to Guienne, with a prohibition against leaving it. Large sums of money which were sent to him induced him to bear his fate with patience. But the natural children arrived at regular intervals. They sought his permission to acknowledge them under his own name; he replied that he did not make children a hundred leagues off. As she was married, it was necessary to conceal the mother's name; it was decided to rely upon a precedent. Saint-Paul, son of Madame de Longueville, a libertine, but a handsome man, who later lived at the expense of Madame d' Orlac, had a child by the Maréchale de La Ferté, whose husband refused to accept the responsibility for it. Madame de Montespan paid Saint-Paul, in order that he might legitimatise this child without designating the mother. Men of the law, well primed with crowns, defended this innovation. The Maréchal de La Ferté, although really fully informed of the truth, did not complain of the entrance of a stranger into his family, and Saint-Paul bore the whole onus of paternity himself. After that, the King did not scruple to imitate a subject.

The eldest of the bastards was the Duc du Maine; the world contains no one more malignant than he, unless it be his wife. When I saw him for the first time he was eighteen years old. His face was vulgarly ugly; in this respect he took neither after his father nor mother, a fact which led scoffers to say that Termes, spy and dissembling rogue, first *valet-de-chambre* to the King, was concerned in it. This was rather a slander than a calumny. Every feature of the Duc du Maine bore the stigmata of deceit and railing ill-nature. His smile was an epigram. This Prince was born straight and well-made; but convulsions ensuing when he was teething spoiled these natural advantages in his infancy, and one of his legs remained shorter than the other. Every remedy was tried in vain; the discouraged physicians recommended the waters of Bourbon, then of Barège, then of Aix-la-Chapelle. Madame de Maintenon, governess of Madame

de Montespan's children, dragged the little Duke all over France, everywhere receiving presents and hospitality. In the course of these journeys, which took her as far as Anvers, she wrote to Madame de Montespan, who showed her letters to the King. The latter forgot his antipathy in view of the governess's pretty wit, and the interest he took in this correspondence was the beginning of Madame de Maintenon's favour. It seems that the King's love for the Montespan was also born of hatred. The Duc du Maine returned as lame as before, but more cunning, and armed with fresh attractions. At an early age he had astonished the Court with his sharp and mordant utterances. At the age of three, as he had been forbidden to call the King "my papa," being in a gondola one day hard by that of Louis XIV, he cried:

"I drink the health of the King, my father," he replied to someone who was pitying him for his lameness.

"What does it matter? No one will notice it when I am seated on my throne."

Indeed, Madame de Maintenon had so fired his ambitious head, that he hoped to succeed his father, in spite of the legitimate heirs. I would not wager that he is even now altogether cured of this madness.

The Comte de Toulouse was of remarkable beauty, and although he was only ten years old at the epoch of which I speak, it was noticeable that Madame de Maintenon had had nothing to do with his education. Louvois had had him brought up in private by an old priest, in a house in the Rue de Vaugirard. He gave promise of those fine qualities which made him later rather a philosopher than a prince. He had all the virtues which the Duc du Maine lacked—courage, rectitude, and honour. His common-sense compensated for his little wit, and his gracious manners won him every heart. Happily he has not belied these happy commencements.

Mademoiselle de Nantes was the child of the Maréchal de Noailles, who never tired of making children for the King. Louis XIV, it is true, remained night and day in Madame de Montespan's apartment; he even worked there with his ministers; but the apartment was vast enough to enable the lady to escape from the vigilance of her argus. The bodyguards whom the King had given her, did not follow her into her wardrobe, and it was there that she received the Maréchal de Noailles, Captain

of the first Company. Mademoiselle de Nantes, indeed, resembled her real father in face, her mother in the temper of her mind. She was not beautiful, not even pretty, but infinitely charming; she had an old look when she was twelve, that is why she is so little changed to-day, when she is fifty. Her education was directed with a view to perfecting her graces, and adorning her with agreeable talents. She danced marvellously, although she had a slight limp like the Duc du Maine, and her uneven gait became her. I am mighty fond of those wide-awake looks and quick movements, which one cannot look at and remain cold. Her figure was not faultless, her wit had nothing extraordinary about it; but there was an infinite charm about her which promptly fascinated. Her manners counted for much in this seduction. As for goodness of heart, not the least appearance of it; a malignity of observation which found vent in witticisms, and did not scruple to wound an honest man. Nor has she, since then, reformed this spirit of contradiction, which cannot be satisfied except at its neighbour's expense. Withal, it is a dry heart, incapable of affection, if not of any other sentiment, since love resides in the heart alone. Such is at least my own opinion.

The great Condé was so enchanted with Mademoiselle de Nantes, who was only twelve years old, that he resolved to marry her to his grandson, Monsieur le Duc, who was about the same age. Louis XIV lent himself to the old man's fantasy, and this marriage was a little comedy for the Court. We saw Monsieur le Duc, disembarrassed for one day of his governor, gaily taking the little wife who was given him, and, after a magnificent wedding, put to bed with her in a vast bed, with a space of ten feet between them, whilst his father, M. le Prince, and Madame de Langeron watched quite unnecessarily to see that their vicinity should lead to no too conjugal consequences. On the morrow, M. le Duc returned to his governor, who continued to teach him grammar. I think I have related the debauch into which the poor little husband let himself be dragged, in order to prove openly that he was in a condition to comport himself properly with Madame la Duchesse. A longer separation was useless, and the wedded pair finally went to bed together in marital fashion.

Monsieur le Prince, to quote the expression of Madame de Grignan, was the great Condé's son "in his own despite, and in spite of all." He held war in abhorrence, and a volley of cannon

gave him the fever; in revenge the batteries of the kitchen filled him with no fear at all, and though he lived soberly as a rule, he often gathered together a company of men and women to substantial repasts. He was frail of body, of a pale complexion, with eyes of fire, which shone like glowing coals. His character offered the rarest contradictions. He had wit, and of the most exquisite kind; knowledge which surpassed that of the wisest by profession: with these fine qualities he would often spend whole hours in piling folly upon folly, or even pass the time in hiding what was good in him. At his death he left a reputation for parsimony, founded on a host of traits which seem to me reasonable enough; however, he engulfed millions at Chantilly, the embellishment of which he superintended himself. He spent more money on his amours than a King of France; he was even more prodigal in the magnificent *fêtes* which he invented with incomparable talent. Sometimes one found him a mean and grovelling flatterer; sometimes arrogant, proud, and insolent. When he wished to please, no one could rival his grace and charm; everybody was seduced by his golden words. He ill-treated his son and his daughters, as he had his father; he loved only himself, and but for that I think no one would have loved him.

His tyrannies have exposed him time after time to the odium of honest folk; it sufficed him to desire a thing to make him seek it at any cost. I will only mention his malevolence with regard to M. Rose. This secretary of the cabinet of the King (he had held the same post under Mazarin), was a little old man, frank and rough in his conduct of business. He possessed a well-built house near Chantilly, with a finely-arranged park. It was his earthly paradise. Monsieur le Prince conceived a desire for it, in order to extend his beloved Chantilly; but the good man, as M. Rose was dubbed, was firm both against his offers and his diabolical ruses.

"Mr. Fox," said the Prince to his obstinate neighbour, "I will send you your equals."

In fact, that same night, four hundred foxes, with fireworks tied to their tails, were sent into M. Rose's domain, where they caused such damage that a part of the trees were burnt. It was a trick borrowed from the Bible. M. Rose liked it no better for this; he sought out the King, and related to him M. le Prince's proceedings in detail. I have heard it said that the King could

refuse nothing to his old secretary, who knew all his secrets. This time he promised him satisfaction. He sent for M. le Prince, and said to him, with a laugh:

"I have been informed, Monsieur, of your imitation of Samson's foxes; but M. Rose, who is as well acquainted as yourself with the Holy Scriptures, intends to have a repetition of the same *fête* in your fine park at Chantilly."

M. le Prince, alarmed at this threat, consented to have the damage caused by his animals made good at his own expense. He never afterwards ventured to attack M. Rose, who, on his side, had more than one opportunity to be avenged on the Prince by his remarks. M. le Prince cannot escape the charge of cruelty towards his poor wife, who was virtuous and ugly. It seems incredible that this husband, so abandoned to gallantry himself, should have been seized with an open and furious jealousy of Madame la Princesse, the silliest of hunchbacks! In his place, I would have sooner burned a taper to anyone who would have relieved me of the tedium of my conjugal duties. This Princess was honestly pious, and her piety enabled her to support with a sad submission the insults and ill-treatment of M. le Prince, who, in his fits of temper, fell upon her with kicks and blows. I have heard it said that she was often bruised all over from them. He tormented her with fantasies which partook of the nature of madness; he sometimes ordered her to fast that she might atone for the sins which he committed himself with his mistresses. Of these he had several to the knowledge of his wife, who received them in her interior with much respect, in order to escape a beating. Madame de Marei, sister of Madame de Grancey, was one of those who cost him most in jewels and presents. He took no liberties with her until he had risen from table, when the wine and good cheer had set the powder on fire. Madame la Maréchale de Richelieu, who detested him as much as he adored her, drained him of his ready money; he even paid large sums to people ordered to spy upon all the actions of the lady, who, on her side, paid them also not to betray her. But as these wretches are without honour, one of them, in the hope of a large reward, revealed to M. le Prince what was passing in his absence. It was his favourite, the Comte de Roucy, who shared his mistress. The Prince fell into a furious rage, swore he would kill the unfaithful pair, and desired to see the extent of their

audacity with his own eyes. He thus deprived himself of the consolation of a doubt, after the familiarities of which he was the invisible witness. M. de Roucy quarrelled with the Maréchale, who had a most amorous and vindictive temperament. She had no thought save to be avenged on her lover, when M. le Prince arrived, and reproached her harshly and brutally with her iniquity.

"Monsieur," replied the masterly woman to him, without being intimidated, "you are mad, jealous, and blind."

"I might be, at any rate," said he; "I have seen too much not to be sure that you love the Comte."

"Love him! I can prove to you that I do not love him."

"In his place I should be satisfied with the proofs you have given him to the contrary."

"Well! post trusty people who will be ready to act; this evening I will bring him here secretly, and you will be incredulous indeed, if your suspicions do not die when he does."

"Madame, if it is thus you desert your friends, I will no longer expose myself to such practices; I will warn Roucy to be on his guard against your rendezvous."

In truth, he never again saw, save at a distance, this respectful lady, who would be revenged on God and the devil. The Comte de Roucy, greatly astonished at this generous conduct of the Prince, begged his pardon, which was granted him; but the first mistress he had was only faithful to him until the Prince's crowns had ordered it otherwise. This was his one reprisal. This mistress was the beautiful Duchess de Lude, who was maid-of-honour to the Duchess de Bourgogne. She was living there on her estates, less from preference than from motives of economy. I have never seen a more determined huntress; she rode on horseback like a man, tore through the woods and across the plains, and was after game from morning to night. She had the reputation of being most uncleanly, never washing herself, and using no perfumes; she passed her life in the stables, although she was lovely enough to please a King. She never surrendered to men, she said, except from weakness. Besides that, in the town as in the provinces, she had her recognised mistresses. The one whom she called *her Montespan* was not as cruel towards the provinces as she would have wished; this girl, who had the loveliest body in creation, sold herself to the Parisian procuresses.

Madame de Lude was ignorant of this, or she would have killed her. A poor country clerk, with formidable shoulders, seduced this handmaiden. Madame de Lude, who surprised him *flagrante delicto*, punished him in the place where he had sinned. The incident passed in her Château, and was related to me by the steward, who, in the lady's presence, treated the poor wretch like Abelard. The operation was performed with much care; the wound having healed, the patient was dismissed with a box containing the missing article. Was it not audacity for M. le Roucy and M. le Prince to have relations with such a woman?

Amongst the mistresses of M. le Prince, occurs the name of Madame de Nevers, the niece of Madame de Montespan, who, when she saw the King was cooling down towards her, intrigued in vain to transfer His Majesty's love to a person of her own family whom she would have under her thumb. The dazzling beauty of Madame de Nevers did not produce a like effect upon him as upon all the rest who saw her. The Montchevreuil, who was entrusted with the negotiations, did not employ sufficiently delicate methods; she went so far as to shut up Madame de Nevers in the King's chamber, who, if he touched her, showed no appearance of having done so. M. le Prince surpassed him in gallantry, in his passion for Madame de Nevers. They carried on a copious correspondence. M. de Nevers had too much wit to grow thin with jealousy; moreover, he would have wasted his time and trouble, and his charming wife would not have cared to turn prude and virtuous before the age of reason. M. de Nevers, however, obstinately set on his own wishes from the same reason that he did not thwart those of his wife, had a mania for starting for Rome, as deliberately as though he were going for a drive in the Allée de la Marne. It often happened that, having entered her carriage, Madame de Nevers heard her husband say to the coachman: *To Rome.* These impromptu journeys were horribly vexatious to her, because she had not the time to prepare fresh toilettes. One day she guessed that M. de Nevers was about to remove her from Paris to Rome; she warned M. le Prince, who promised to prevent this excursion of two hundred leagues. He addressed himself, therefore, not to the husband nor to the Duke, but to the poet. M. de Nevers, who recognised no rivals in lighter poetry but Hamilton and Chaulieu, attached much importance to his rhymes, which he strung together like

beads on a rosary. M. le Prince announced a *fête* at Chantilly, at which all the Court was eagerly looking forward to be present; he then feigned to be embarrassed to find a poet who would compose the devices and diversions.

"In truth," said M. de Nevers, to whom he unburdened himself, "you have found what you want. I will give up my journey to Rome, and my verses will dishonour me if they do not do you honour."

The *fête* cost the Prince a hundred thousand crowns, and Madame de Nevers remained at Paris. Methinks there was as much self-love as love shown in the incident.

Mademoiselle, known as the *Grande Mademoiselle* (to distinguish her from Monsieur's daughter), the daughter of Gaston, the granddaughter of Henri IV, had been the wealthiest heiress in Europe; she refused most illustrious offers, saying that kings bored her. When I saw her a few years before her death, she was rapidly approaching her sixtieth year, and was consoling herself for her love sorrows by writing memoirs, which she spiced with sentimentality, as though they were pastoral romances. She had a taste for all that approached the romantic. This caused her marriage with M. de Lauzun, who desired it to be celebrated at the King's mass. The Princes, who dreaded lest the enterprising genius of M. de Lauzun should lead to some extravagant ambition, moved heaven and earth to obtain the King's veto on the two lovers' espousals. M. de Lauzun, who had been vested by contracts with four of the finest duchies in the kingdom, let himself be led, in spite of the orders of Louis XIV, into a secret marriage. The coadjutor of Rheims revealed everything to the King, who had M. de Lauzun confined in the Bastille, then at Pignerol. Mademoiselle showed the utmost despair; she screamed, wept, and took to her bed; for many days she lived on nothing but broth. Madame de Montespan, who had contributed with all her efforts to M. de Lauzun's arrest, still visited the disconsolate Mademoiselle, who could not accustom herself to the absence of her dear Duc de Montpensier.

"But for you," she cried between her sobs, "he would be here, he would be here!" and she pointed to the place in her bed, which, perhaps, he had occupied.

M. de Lauzun suffered ten years of captivity, and was on the

point of death more than once—so much so, that he asked for a confessor, a Capucin, for fear lest a mock priest should be sent him. The Capucin having arrived, he plucked out part of his beard, to convince himself it was not a false one. Finally, he was promised his liberty, on condition that he abdicated the Duchies of Aumale and Dombes in favour of the Duc du Maine. Mademoiselle would have sacrificed all her riches to recover her beloved Lauzun. Madame de Montespan busied herself so actively, that the prisoner of Pignerol, tired of resistance, agreed to everything; he was set at liberty, restored to his Princess, but was still banished from the Court. The Duc du Maine, as a sign of gratitude for the gifts of Mademoiselle, also put on her livery. But ten years' absence had greatly changed that Lauzun, whose audacious love had subjugated the most rebellious heart in France; he could not, for all his courage, feign any love for a sexagenarian face, withered, wrinkled, and severe. He had not yet permission to show himself at Court, and, to improve the time, he gambled terrifically with Monsieur, who, as Madame de Cornuel said, would not have been happy in Paradise without cards or dice. One day, when M. de Lauzun was in a winning mood, he said loudly:

"When I lose, I have no resource but to court my old wife; to-night, at any rate, thanks to fortune, I shall sleep in peace."

Mademoiselle to whom the saying was reported, armed herself with an heroic resolve.

"Monsieur," she said to her husband, "your old wife will be delighted to know you are far away from here; I advise you, also, to be a little less confident of the inheritance of Mademoiselle."

In fact, Monsieur was later on her universal legatee. As for M. de Lauzun, he went to gamble in England, where the revolution brought him still further adventure.

CHAPTER XIII

DUBOIS PRESENTED TO THE KING AND MADAME DE MAINTENON —A PIOUS EVENING—THE PERFUMES—ORIGIN OF DUBOIS' FORTUNE—D'AUBIGNÉ, MADAME DE MAINTENON'S BROTHER —HIS ECCENTRIC CONDUCT—HIS ACQUAINTANCES IN THE TUILERIES—THE EARS OF PÈRE LA CHAISE—ARRIVAL OF THE KING AND QUEEN OF ENGLAND—LA FONTAINE AND THE ABBÉ GRÉCOURT—THE INTERVIEW AT CHATOU—RECONCILIATION WITH LAUZUN—THE QUEEN'S WIT—GREATNESS OF LOUIS XIV—PETTINESS OF JAMES II—MADAME AND THE FALSE PRINCESSES PALATINE

When I was presented to the King, he glanced at me, then turned his gaze away; my face was like any other face, and my name betrayed my base origin enough to make the smallest country squire turn up his nose. Afterwards, he addressed a few insignificant words to me, to which my best response was to courtesy to the ground. It was not until the occasion of the Duc de Chartres' wedding that he condescended to me from his pedestal. Having become, in some sort, the indispensable tail of my pupil, at the expense of the Marquis d'Arcy, who had nothing from his charge of governor but the title and the honours, I followed the Duc de Chartres everywhere, to church as well as to evil haunts, to his apartment and to the theatre. It was by this means that I introduced myself even into the presence of Madame de Maintenon. I will endeavour to recall, moreover, the persons I was accustomed to see there. My introduction to the Maintenon, who was already called Madame *Maintenance*, owing to the tyrannical empire she exercised over the King, is still present to my memory, and I regard it as the origin of my fortune.

It was, I think, at the beginning of the year 1689 that the Duc de Chartres was invited to a sort of charitable function in Madame de Maintenon's apartment. M. Huchon, Curé of Versailles, was to preach a sermon; Bossuet, Fénélon, Père

La Chaise were present; the Duc du Maine, Madame de Caylus, Madame de Heudicourt, the Cardinal de Noailles, Messeiurs de Villiers, d'Harcourt, Montchevreuil, and others, the Court favourites, the bastards, and the King, who rubbed his hand, saying:

"Gentlemen, Madame de Maintenon and Père La Chaise promise us indulgences."

"We all require them with your Majesty," I answered.

The King, who did not like to be addressed where he had not put a question, turned his back on me. The Marquis d'Arcy took me by the hand and conducted me to the Maintenon, who was feeding the Duc de Bourgogne with sweetmeats.

"Madame," said the Marquis, "this is M. l'Abbé Dubois, who is sub-governor to the Duc de Chartres."

"Take care, M. Dubois," she said, "that your lessons profit him as much as they deserve."

"Thus far, Madame, I have nothing but praise to tell of M. le Duc de Chartres."

"One of these evenings you must make him maintain a thesis in our presence; I will admit to you that if he is quoted as a miracle of wit, his piety is not spoken of so favourably."

"If you will deign, Madame, to favour me with your advice, I will follow it."

"Good, M. l'Abbé; the occasion may, perhaps, arise, and we will put your talents to the test."

"From this moment, Madame, I consider myself in your service, and will devote myself thereto."

"What is your native place, M. Dubois?"

"Brives-la-Gaillarde in Limousin."

"Do you know that you have gone far in coming to the Palais-Royal?"

"With the aid of your protection, I feel assured I shall not stop where I am."

"I see you are ambitious."

"And patient, Madame."

"Believe me, the one quality without the other is but a fire of straw. However, I do not see where you hope to go when once the Prince is of age to dispense with a governor."

"Assuredly, I should be embarrassed, Madame, were there no barrettas and bishoprics in France."

Madame de Maintenon bit her lips to restrain her laughter. The King, seeing me in such close conference, drew near to discover its motive. All his life long he had had an invincible horror of perfumes, which he discerned from afar with singular tact of smell. He often said to Madame de Montespan:

"Fie on all your scents! One would think you put on nice ones to conceal a nasty. What is the good of embalming yourself in your lifetime?"

Madame de Maintenon, who exhaled a strong odour of musk or amber, was the despair of the King, who reproached everybody except herself with steeping themselves in perfumes. Madame alone at Court had a free tongue. She said to the King, one day when he was scolding her for scenting herself:

"Sire, I know of no other perfumes to cleanse me but river water, cold and pure. As for Madame, all the perfumery she employs will not prevent us smelling the widow of Scarron the Cripple."

This was the origin of that railing hatred which always existed between these two ladies. The King, then, having taken a few steps towards me, stopped short, distended his nostrils, and cried, stamping his foot:

"The Devil! have we the plague here? These women would think themselves aggrieved if they did not fill their pockets with scents! Is that not so, Madame?"

"Sire," replied the Maintenon, without losing countenance, "the smell of benzoin is enough to make one faint."

"Yes, indeed," added the old satyr, Fagon, "we were better treated at Lavienne's, the bather, where there was a pretty enough consumption of aromatics."

"It must be Madame la Dauphine, who has worn perfumed wigs ever since she was last brought to bed."

"I vow to you, Madame," cried the Dauphine, "that I do not know what you mean."

"It is Madame then," resumed the Maintenon, with a smile.

"If it is I," replied the Princess Palatine, "I consent to be stoned, on condition that Madame de Maintenon throw the first stone."

"Cease this discussion, if you please," said the King, taking hold of Louvois' arm; "let he or she who has these drugs go out instantly, or I will leave the place to him."

I saw every face blanch, and everyone throwing glances of accusation at his neighbour. Madame de Maintenon, in spite of her queenly authority, gave way to a secret uneasiness, and, her eyes being fixed on me, I understood what she expected from my devotion.

"Sire," I cried, "do not overwhelm me with your anger."

"Pardon this poor man," interrupted the favourite, who foresaw my device; "he was probably unaware of your prohibition."

"What, Abbé!" said the Duc de Chartres, "'tis you who smell like a lily of the valley?"

"Why wait such a time before you tell us?" continued Louis XIV, stopping his nose. "Come, take yourself off."

"Sire," I answered, walking towards the door backwards, "I must have touched some chemical compound whilst working just now with His Royal Highness."

"Practise chemistry as much as you like," said the King, "but do not come and infect us with it here."

"Follow your governor," said the Maintenon to the Duc de Chartres, "since it incommodes the King; the making of a savant is not all roses."

"Come, Dubois," retorted the Duc, "come and let us console ourselves for our exile by reading the Aeneid travestied by that queer rogue Scarron."

The King frowned, and almost went so far as to raise his stick against a Prince of the Blood. The Court was dumfounded at the audacity of these words, and the Duc du Maine said aloud: "This Abbé gives my cousin Chartres a fine education."

I burst out in just reproaches against my rebellious pupil, who sent me roundly to the devil. This imprudence would have made me lose my place, if Madame de Maintenon had not been on my side. Her gratitude did not stop there, for on the morrow I received the two perfumed gloves she had been wearing, but filled with gold pieces, with this Voiturean note, which might have excited the envy of the Hotel Rambouillet: "To recompense that for which you put on the gloves."

I was tempted to believe in fairy-tales. Madame de Maintenon was large in her liberalities, and as long as she was willing to be useful to me, I remained faithfully attached to her.

D'Aubigné, the brother of Madame de Maintenon, was all that was most eccentric, bold, and amusing. He bore the stigmata of

his libertine exploits—red eyes and a pimply skin. "*Fructus belli*," he would say to ladies who made fun of his face. "I was handsome when I was young; now that I am old, I still think myself young, if not beautiful." He had been through several campaigns, and had attained no higher rank than that of Captain of Infantry. He spoke of his battles, his wounds, and his feats of arms with such exaggeration, that a cit, who heard him talking in the Tuileries, asked if he was Turenne or the great Condé. He had been nominated in turn Governor of Bedford, of Aigues-Mortes, of Cognac, and of Berry, and he complained that his brother-in-law, the King, treated him so scurvily, and did not make him a Marshal of France, although he had two hands and feet like so many others. He was a gulf for money; he would have ruined the Emperor of Japan, and the considerable sums he extracted were dissipated on women and gaming. One day, when he was playing against M. de Vivonne, after having lost all he possessed, he wished to play a hundred thousand crowns on parole.

"D'Aubigné," said M. de Vivonne, laughing, "you are as careless of money as a Marshal of France."

"Certainly, my Marshal's *bâton* is still in the King's treasury; I preferred it to be all gold, and I don't perceive that it grows any less."

When he was without a farthing of ready money, he repaired to his sister, and said to her, in language even more energetic than I repeat:

"Do you suppose, Madame Scarron, that I suffer you in His Majesty's bed, if you don't throw in my eyes to make me blind, the dust of a dukedom and a peerage?"

"Miserable sinner," said Madame de Maintenon, "will you never repent?"

"Indeed I will, when I am fit for nothing else; in the meantime, give me the wherewithal to do honour to Madame la Marquise de Maintenon."

"Fie, my brother! Never call me Marquise."

D'Aubigné held his Court at the Tuileries, provoking the women and haggling over his conquests. When he encountered some agreeable face he went off to live for a fortnight in a family he did not know. His caprice once satisfied, he departed elsewhere, as long as his money lasted. He never reappeared at

Versailles till his purse was empty, and his impertinences did not spare the King, who said: "When that madman, d'Aubigné, is in the gallery, I dare not show myself." As for wit, he had a fund of it, and did not spare it.

I was present at a most diverting scene, at a time when I was one of the faithful of Madame de Maintenon. M. de Meaux, Père La Chaise, and some others were conversing of pious works and of the Convent of Saint-Cyr, when d'Aubigné entered, half-drunk, with his hose tumbled below his haunches.

"Zounds," he burst out, "I find you singular, sister, in your choice of company. Black robes conduce to melancholy, and piety and cant is poor stuff. I have spent the whole night merry-making, and have had a belly-full. You, on the other hand, have been foolish enough to quit your joyous way of life. When you were only the widow of that good fellow Scarron, the jolly suppers you had with the Villarceaux were something to see. Word of honour! it is mighty absurd to have changed all that for a prudery which deceives nobody."

"Sir," cried Madame de Maintenon in anger, "go and make these impious statements somewhere else; leave the room, or I will call my people."

And, as he did not budge, she added, with more irritation:

"Outside, Monsieur! Do you not hear me?"

"Nay, dear sister, Père La Chaise has stolen my ears."

In spite of the respect in which they held that personage, all present started laughing, for the ears of Père La Chaise were celebrated for their size.

I was a witness, like all the Court, of the arrival of the King and Queen of England, which took place in the early days of 1689. I was the first to draw the courtiers' attention to the piteous countenance of James II, who, as Louvois said to his brother the archbishop, lost three kingdoms for a mass. M. de Lauzun, who had chivalrously gone to London, played a part in the last acts of this royal progress; he remained faithful to the King when all abandoned him, and served him with his sword and counsels. The greatest service which he rendered him was in conducting the Queen and Prince of Wales to France through fifty Dutch vessels. I would not swear that the little Prince ever issued from the womb of the Queen, and I have heard more than once that he had been introduced under the

coverlet of the *accouchée* in a warming-pan. These supposititious children are happy political frauds in hereditary monarchies, where they may save a revolution. Here it was labour lost. William, instead of waiting peaceably for the heritage of his father-in-law, went to claim it before his death. James, pressed on all sides by the Dutch troops, decided upon flight. One Sunday in the month of December, his devotions over, he dismissed all his servants, and advised his last partizans to turn towards the rising sun of his rival. After which, he lay for an hour with his wife, the better to take leave of her. He next ordered the person who was standing at the door to be admitted. M. de Lauzun entered.

"Monsieur," said the King, "I confide the Queen and my son to you; there needs must be great risks to run to conduct all that is dearest to me to the Court of my cousin the King of France. God be with you, M. de Lauzun!"

The latter, romantic in his actions as in his speech, thanked the King for what he termed a happiness, and asked his permission to have the company of a gentleman of Avignon, Saint-Victor, I believe, who was as brave as deserving. He wrapped up the Prince of Wales in his mantle, and gave his hand to the Queen, who was followed by two nurses. They had chosen expressly raiment so common that the master of the ship which conveyed them, did not suspect what august passengers he had on board. M. de Lauzun, moreover, was there, his hand on his dagger, fully prepared to force him to his duty. Finally, they dropped anchor at Calais, and the Queen, who was a miracle of wit, beautiful still, and well-made, displayed so much gratitude towards her cavalier, in terms of such familiarity, that Mademoiselle was jealous.

Meanwhile, a thousand sinister reports were circulated about the King of England; some said that he had been slain, others that he was drowned; they were talking of shipwreck, of assassination, of a victory, I know not what, when M. Charost's courier arrived, announcing the Queen's arrival at Calais. This gave us patience to await fresh news of the King; in fact, on the Wednesday in January it was being said that James II was a prisoner, when M. de Louvois arrived, breathless, laughing, flushed, and absorbed in his embassy. He spoke apart to the King, who cried aloud:

"His Britannic Majesty is at Boulogne."

The mass was at once forgotten; everyone quitted his bench, came and went; the ladies kissed one another; you could not hear yourself speak. The priest, astonished at the commotion, thought the Château was on fire, and stopped in the middle of the Creed. Monseigneur said to Madame:

"See the heart of the French."

"There is more smoke than fire," said the Princess.

At last the Père La Chaise asked for a *Te Deum*, which was accepted with transport, and sung by every voice. M. de Meaux said, on leaving:

"We have committed an infidelity to God."

On the morrow, after breakfast, the King left Versailles, accompanied by the whole Court and all his family. It was competition as to who would show the greatest zeal. The bodyguards, the gendarmes, the light horse, and the musketeers, with ensigns flowing and trumpets sounding, gave an air of triumph to the festival. The cold was keen, in spite of a fine winter sunshine. I was in the Duc de Chartres' carriage with the Marquis d'Arcy and La Fontaine, who had come to ask the Prince if he might mount behind his carriage; he had him placed in the interior by his side, and recited his *Tales* to him.

"Monsieur," said La Fontaine, "there is a young canon who is more successful than I am in that manner."

"A canon!" interposed the Prince.

"Certainly," I put in; "that kind of folk has a wit rendered more enlightened than the rest, owing to its numerous fasts."

"You are quite right," said La Fontaine, "the man of whom I speak is named Grécourt, and he is a droll dog, who knows the litanies of Cythera."

Thereupon he began to retail to us, with all the gravity in the world, a thousand rhymed indecencies, which made us cry with laughter. He soon passed without any transition to his own verses, and asked us if it would not be proper to offer a volume of his *Contes* to the Queen of England.

"She does not know the French language in a dressing-gown," said M. d'Arcy.

"Ah well, Monsieur, I will do better; I will show it her in the nude."

"She would not understand you," said the Prince.

"She would understand you too well," I added.

The King judged fit to halt near Chatou, in a large open place forming a square, into which several roads led. The troops were drawn up in a circle, the carriages in a line, and we waited impatiently for a good quarter of an hour.

"A plague on it!" said the Duc de Chartres; "my kinswoman of England must be mighty worshipful to make us brave this terrible cold!"

The burgesses of Paris, men and women, eye-gapers by nature, had run up with cries of *Vive le Roi*, flinging their caps into the air. They would have adventured themselves amongst the guards if they had been allowed. The Prince of Wales was the first to arrive. The King, as soon as he perceived his carriage in the distance, descended from his own, and all followed his example. Louis XIV, bare-headed, saluting all the ladies, bore that day an air of grace and majesty more striking even than was his wont. He said to Madame de Maintenon, in a moved voice:

"I feel now that all kings are brothers."

"They are often *hostile brothers*," answered Madame de Maintenon.

The carriage of the Prince of Wales having come to a stop, the King himself opened the door, saying:

"It is my part to pay the first visit."

He took his child in his arms, kissed him, caressed him, and passed him to the ladies, who struggled for him, and went into ecstasies over his beauty. The King went a few steps to meet the Queen of England, who had hastened to leave her carriage. They saluted with tears in their eyes, and the Princess addressed these words to him:

"Sire, you see an unfortunate Princess, who hopes for no consolation save in your Majesty's goodness."

"Madame, in giving you asylum I do you but a sorry service, but I hope in the future to render you greater ones."

"Whatever happens, Sire, the Crown of England must depend on that of France; I put the Prince of Wales under your protection."

The cold brought the interview to an end; the King made the Queen of England sit in his carriage on his right hand, presented

Monsieur and Monseigneur to her, who also entered the carriage, and the cortège returned to Saint-Germain, where they arrived at four o'clock.

The King was the first to descend; he gave his hand to the Queen of England, and, accompanied by the Princes, conducted her to the late Queen's apartment, which she was to occupy. The Prince of Wales was introduced to his own, which was that of the Duc de Bourgogne.

"Madame," said the King, with a sigh, pointing out the places which his wife had inhabited, "if the late Madame Marie-Thérèse of Austria is still interested in us, from the heaven whither her soul has gone, she cannot but be flattered to see her place occupied by another Marie so beautiful and so virtuous."

"Sire," replied the Queen, "in her you have suffered an irreparable loss."

People marvelled at the grace and wit of this Princess; every word she said was repeated. She was, in truth, of remarkable beauty, although somewhat pale, with superb contours, and magnificent eyes. She had the prettiest hands, and there was a rivalry as to who should kiss them. She spoke with great purity and ease; to see her so composed in her manners, as in her speech, one would have deemed she had never left the Court of France. M. de Lauzun had not arrived in time enough to assist at the interview; thus he happened to be there, with a face showing much emotion, when the King passed. He uttered an exclamation which well counterfeited enthusiasm, and began by essaying his old habits as a favourite; he threw his hat and gloves at the feet of the King, who said to him, with mock kindness:

"My dear Peguilhem, you know that I am no longer of an age to have favourites, although always friends, and you are of their number."

"Sire," answered M. de Lauzun, repressing his familiarity, "I am too happy to see your Majesty again."

"So you have been through perils? But you have acted like a hero; in future you will go no more to London."

"Sire, my fidelity to the King of England is more recent than that I owe to you."

After these words, the King passed with the Queen into a private cabinet, where they were closeted for two hours; such is

the malevolence of courtiers that they doubted if they had spent all that time in the discussion of affairs, and I mind me there was talk of it in the streets. At the end of this long conference the Queen was escorted back to the Prince of Wales's apartment, and the King, highly satisfied with his day, returned to Versailles with the Court.

On the day after the installation of the Queen of England at Saint-Germain, it was announced that the King of England was arriving in the carriages which had been sent for him to Clermont. With the fall of night, the King left Versailles and repaired to the Queen, who received him in bed, excusing herself on the ground of fatigue. About six o'clock James II appeared, lit by a great number of torches; the Court was drawn up in silence to salute him on his descent from his carriage; the Chevalier de Saint-Deaude, lieutenant of the bodyguard, had been appointed by the King to serve his person.

"Monsieur," said James II to him, "I could not have made a better choice."

He encountered Lauzun, who was about to fall on one knee before him; he raised him and embraced him several times.

"Here is a good friend whom I am overjoyed to see again," he said aloud. He did not leave go of his hand, and went up the stairs with him; he found the King of France at the door of the guard-room.

"Sire!" he cried in a trembling voice; and, as he bowed respectfully, Louis XIV opened his arms and pressed him tenderly to his heart, in such fashion that they remained for several minutes in each other's arms.

"I could not feel more joy than I do," said the King of France, "in having your Majesty."

"Ah, Sire, I owe my life to you, and that of my wife and son, and it has not been your fault that I do not owe you my kingdom."

"We will give it back to you; but let us waste no time; the Queen burns with impatience to see your Majesty."

"Sire, here is my protector," resumed the King of England, pointing to Lauzun, "and I pray your Majesty to grant him all your friendship in return for the succour I have received from him."

"It is well; it is enough that such is your Majesty's good pleasure. Lauzun, try to appease Mademoiselle."

He took the King of England by the arm, and keeping him always on his right, escorted him to the apartment of the Queen, who gave a cry when the King said to her:

"I bring you the man you have been expecting with so much anxiety."

She almost swooned away with joy, and remained for a long time in the arms of her husband, whom she had thought dead. Then followed floods of tears which seemed never like to dry. The Prince of Wales was summoned, whom his father kissed and wept over; the King of France caressed the child with all possible gentleness.

"Sire," said the Queen, "I had envied the happy lot of my son, who is not of an age to feel his misfortunes; but how I should feel inclined to pity him, that he cannot feel your Majesty's goodness to him."

"May your Majesty retain this feeling," added James II, "he has great need of it."

The King sent for Madame de Maintenon, who presented herself with inflated majesty, and was received without great ceremony.

"I was waiting," she said, smiling with a queenly air, "until your Majesty should admit me to her presence."

"Madame," replied the Queen, with a laughing face, "it would have been the greater loss to me, in that I have no livelier desire than to meet you; I beg you to show us the same kindness that His Majesty displays."

After some instants of compliments, the Princes of the Blood were admitted; Monseigneur and Monsieur also embraced the King of England, who was so pleased that he would have embraced the very pages. They asked him for a recital of what had happened, and, fearing to refuse, he submitted his English eloquence to a rude test; he not only spoke French ill, but he had a horrible stammer, and the ill-natured said that the first thing he needed was a teacher of grammar; for his wits and his tongue grew so embarrassed with his story that he ended with a gape, and looked so foolish that the King took pity on him, and gave orders to start for Versailles, after having said to him:

"Your Majesty is at home here; you will permit me often to come and visit you, and I hope you will come and see me also at Versailles."

Such was the two days' interview; then people ceased to speak of it. The generosity and greatness which Louis XIV displayed on this occasion was specially admired: a casket containing six thousand pistols was given to the Queen on the day of her arrival, one of ten thousand to the King, and six hundred thousand crowns were set aside yearly for their household. The Queen's wit was greatly praised; her least repartees were quoted as masterpieces, amongst others these words, which she uttered on seeing the discipline of the King's guards:

"Sire," she said, "these are admirable troops; but what I admire the most is their fidelity to your Majesty."

She gave him to understand by this that her own had betrayed her. As for the King of England, a few days sufficed to render him insignificant and ridiculous. After visiting the Princes and M. de Lauzun, he could think of nothing better than to haunt the houses of the Jesuits, which caused people to say that he was one himself, and of this I have no doubt. He flung himself at the head of all the priests who wanted him, and the Court fell away. His face promised nothing it did not bear out; old and withered, worn with sorrow, he had the look of a penitent, and to become altogether discredited, it only wanted his unprofitable descent upon Ireland. His second advent to France, at bottom deserving pity, only inspired satirical couplets; and his death, which occurred as the result of all these reverses, made less noise than that of some petty provincial gentleman. He had prayed to God that he might die on a Friday, and this grace was granted him.

It was about this time, I think, that a burlesque incident happened which scandalised the King and amused the Court. One morning, when I was walking in the garden of Versailles with the young Massillon, of whom I shall have more to say, I saw Madame coming towards me, in full toilette, and in a fury that is hard to describe.

"Have you seen them?" she said to us, clenching her fists.

"Who, pray, Madame?" we answered with one voice, astonished to see the Duchesse d' Orléans alone and in such a plight.

"The strumpets of Strasbourg!" she said, with her German frankness. "Imagine, gentlemen, what the Dauphine came to tell me this morning with tears in her eyes. The old woman knows to what a degree I hold to the honour of my family, the

noblest and most ancient of all that occupy European thrones. Well, to grieve and dishonour me, she has brought two women of the town from Strasbourg; whom she passes off for Countesses Palatine. That is nothing; but she has placed them in the position of attendants to the Caylus, her niece, and she goes about everywhere plotting against me; she has dared to say in the apartment that the Palatine crop grew in every soil."

"Madame, what are you going to do?" interposed Massillon.

"Do not be uneasy; when I am in the right, I mock at the old witch; but in which direction did they pass? I saw them from my window, and I am going to tear the schemers' masks off." She was finishing when she saw the two German girls facing her, in the company of Madame de Caylus. She called them in imperious tones, and asked them:

"Who are you?"

"I am Countess of Lutzelstein," replied the youngest.

"By the left hand, no doubt?"

"No, Madame, I am no bastard; the young Count Palatine legitimately married my mother, who is of the house of Gehlen."

"If that were so, poor wretch, you would have no right to call yourself Countess Palatine; for, in our family, *mésalliances* are not recognised. But you lie, I am sure of it; the Count Palatine never married your mother; he may have been in bed with her, as he was with many others."

"Madame, be calm; what have I done to you, that you should overwhelm me with abuse?"

"Listen, if for the future you give yourself out as a Princess Palatine, I will have your petticoats cut and yourself whipped by lackeys."

"Madame, Madame, pardon me."

"I am well aware the Maintenon is the cause of this deception. Be off; resume your old method of life, your mother's; but let me hear you no more spoken of except as an impudent hussy."

A number of persons hastened up at the sound of this unbecoming quarrel; Louvois was not the last to inform himself of what had occurred, in order to acquaint Madame de Maintenon. The two girls wept; he approached the prettier of them, spoke aside to her, and led her away. I have heard that he kept her, until his death, under another name; the girl grew rich in the profession. The other was struck so suddenly by Madame's

threats, that she took to her bed in a fever and died two days later. Madame de Maintenon, who had devised all this mischief, told the King that Madame was responsible for the death of a Princess Palatine. The King only laughed at it; he merely said to Madame, jokingly:

"It is not prudent to jest on the subject of your house; I think he who would be a Palatine runs a risk of his life with you."

"Sire, I am not fond of deceptions," she answered rudely, her gaze fixed on Madame de Maintenon. Massillon told me afterwards that if he were a Prince Palatine he would not boast of it.

CHAPTER XIV

NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE DUC DE CHARTRES—THE SECRET DOOR — PÈRE LA CHAISE — THE NOCTURNAL RENDEZVOUS—COMPACT OF DUBOIS WITH MADAME DE MAINTENON — HE PREPARES THE MARRIAGE OF THE DUC DE CHARTRES—MADEMOISELLE DE BLOIS—DUBOIS WITH MADAME —HER ANGER—THE INTERVIEW WITH THE KING—DUBOIS RETIRES DURING THE REJOICINGS

Monsieur, seeing the dissipated conduct of his son, was sighing over his inability to marry him. Europe was in a blaze of general war; it was not the moment to ask for the hands of Princesses, unless one went to seek them in Siam. Madame, wrapped around in her German prejudices, only hoped for some Palatine scarecrow for the Duc de Chartres; and the latter regarded any alliance at all as detrimental to his pleasures. But the Palatinate, ravaged by the armies of Louis XIV in the war of succession, had not yet been reduced to make peace under exorbitant conditions. Monsieur resigned himself, therefore, to seek a bride for his son in his brother's Court. The Princesse de Conti, recently left a widow, had the wherewithal to please a second husband. Lovely, witty, and still young, she would have been perfect if her title of natural daughter of the King had not revolted the pride of the Duchesse d'Orléans, who was mighty curious to any unequivocal nobility. However, she was softened by the reflection that the Prince de Conti had taken her as his wife; in her eyes, this was a sort of rehabilitation; the qualities and vast fortune of the Princess enabled her to forget that she was the daughter of Mademoiselle de La Vallière. Monsieur undertook to negotiate the marriage, to which, at the outset, the Princess did not seem opposed; the Duc de Chartres, whom it suited them not to inform of this project of alliance, none the less continued to pay his court to the Princess, without knowing that he was committing in advance an infidelity to himself. Matters were thus, and only the King's approval was required

(that of the Prince did not disturb Monsieur), when the Princesse de Conti answered drily that everything was broken off, and she wished to retain her freedom. A word from Louis XIV had abolished these hopes of union; the Chevalier de Lorraine and his brother had been for three years in the confidence of another project, of which I was to secure the success.

One evening, tired of following the tracks of a humble beauty, whom the Prince had stalked at the Opera, I returned to the hotel with the firm intention of resting from my labours. I was in an angry temper that night, it wanted little but that, having already beaten my servant, I did not fall upon myself. There was a gentle knock at the secret door which opened into a wardrobe for the use and convenience of my mistresses. By this means they had no need to cross the ante-chamber under the impudent eyes of the lackeys. Although I felt in no condition to do justice to myself in a *tête-à-tête*, I opened, nevertheless, hoping to cool my blood in an unfettered interview. What was my surprise to see instead of a woman Père La Chaise enter.

I had already encountered the famous Jesuit at Court, but, whether for pride on his side or awkwardness on mine, I had not yet addressed a word to him. His face had a character so grotesque, and at the same time so subtle, that it would have been recognisable amongst a thousand. Big eyes, almost on a level with his forehead, rolling stupidly beneath the heavy brows; a foolish smile stretched over a monkish face; ears that hung almost to his shoulders; a halting and tortuous gait: thus the man. Many of his penitents, Madame de Maintenon amongst them, have assured me that he had all the virtues; but I conceive that his gentleness was a mask, his kindness a snare, and his humanity a lie; I have always judged him to be a hypocrite. Thus the Jesuits, in order to thank him for his good offices, have made a saint of him after his death. He was penetrated with the duties of his Order, which seeks to extend its dominion at all costs, and although his wit was mean enough, he possessed the graces of his estate to such a degree that he employed them most successfully to dominate his penitent. He was always the first to be informed of the operations of the ministers, and Louvois, who was not the man to give himself fetters or masters, understood that he had to base his power on that of the King's confessor. It was he who dictated the warnings of the tribunal of penance,

and Père La Chaise served him as an instrument on all the occasions when he had to stand up and thwart Louis XIV. Père La Chaise constituted himself the spokesman of Heaven with a persuasiveness which was worth as many presents and benefices to him as he desired. Madame de Maintenon was too skilful a politician to separate herself from the Jesuits and the confessor; on the contrary, she spared neither pains nor money to attach the Père La Chaise, and he even sacrificed Louvois to her. Persons who have known the interior of Madame de Maintenon, allege that she won over the good father by means which cost her little, and that Louvois' disgrace was due to the fact of his having surprised the King's confessor in the exercise of very different functions to those of his charge. Calumny is so ready to attack the great, that it is always associated with truth.

"Abbé," said Père La Chaise to me, motioning to me with his hand not to utter his name, "do not be astonished that I have visited you myself; it concerns a grave and urgent matter."

"Speak, Monseigneur," I said, bidding him be seated; "no one can hear us."

"I would not rely on that, my son; besides, it is not I who have to question you. You are not a Jesuit?"

"No, not actually; but I practise the principles of the Order in which I was brought up."

"Very well; take the oath, and you will be a Jesuit; then we shall have confidence in you."

He made me swear to observe, before all things, the laws of the General of the Order, and I swore all that he wished.

"Now I can count on your inviolate zeal," said he; "remember moreover, that your life depends on your silence. Betake yourself, immediately, to Versailles, to the courtyard of the chapel of the Château; there you will hear what there is to do."

I wished to risk a few questions, which met with no response save a severe injunction to repair to the spot indicated. Promises of recompense decided me, and, reassured by the character of Père La Chaise, who would not have wished to decoy me into an ambush, I did not even take the time to change my toilette. I descended with the King's confessor, who saw me into a carriage, after having given me his benediction. My fears ceased immediately with the reflection that the affair must needs be of importance, if Père La Chaise were mixed up in it. Indeed, had the

intimation reached me from a source more suspicious, I should not have exposed myself to this nocturnal rendezvous. I arrived shortly before midnight, and, as I was known to the guards of the gate, I made a pretence of going towards the new buildings where the Duc de Chartres' apartments were situated; then I suddenly entered the little courtyard of the chapel, which I found open. I had not long to wait. A small veiled woman, whom I recognised as Balbieu, the old serving-woman of Madame de Maintenon, escorted me to the latter's room by a small staircase. Madame de Maintenon was in bed; she was not asleep, but reading dispatches, with which her bed was strewn. I perceived, from the expressive glance she cast at me, that it was she who had summoned me. The Balbieu brought me a chair and withdrew. I could not believe my eyes, and it seemed to me that I was in the deception of a dream; then returning to my accustomed ideas, at the sight of the perfumed bed and what it contained, I supposed myself on the highway to a conquest obtained at the expense of a greater than myself. I flattered myself that Madame de Maintenon had heard speak of the Duc de Chartres' preceptor, in terms and under relations which had piqued her curiosity. Oh, the vanity of men!

"Monsieur l'Abbé," she said to me, "I have forewarned you that one might have need of you, and the moment has come for you to bring to light the skill with which you are credited."

"Madame," I answered, still uncertain as to the tone I ought to adopt, "there is nothing I would not do to deserve . . ."

"The gratitude which you will obtain. But before opening my heart to you, I beg you to refrain from any indiscretion which might be your ruin."

"Madame, the kindness you show me is enough, without my making a parade of it."

"It concerns an affair of State, and the honour of the King is implicated. His Majesty wishes to give his daughter, Mademoiselle de Blois, to the Duc de Chartres."

"Ah! Madame, with what joy will not the Prince accept the alliance!"

"You think so? Madame, however, obstinately set, as she is, on her Palatine nobility, which is not worth even that of the d'Aubignés, has openly declared against the 'Bastards,' as she

calls them; and I know that we must drag a consent out of her to this marriage."

"We shall have it, Madame, since I answer to you for that of the Duc de Chartres."

"That is what we expect of you; I have been informed that you had the Prince's confidence, no matter at what price, and I have looked to you to prepare him to obey the King."

"If I have acquired any influence over my pupil, I will employ it in your service."

"Make haste; the Chevalier de Lorraine and M. de Marsan have brought Monsieur to the point of saying that he will be only moderately annoyed at this alliance; when the Prince is determined, the thing will be done, and we will let the Bavarian woman scream till she chokes."

"Madame, if I may be allowed to choose my recompense, I venture to beg you to make it exactly similar to that of the Chevalier de Lorraine."

"You ask the impossible, Abbé; the Chevalier was paid in advance three years ago, when he received the orders of the King, as also his brother; he will have in addition two Abbeys. I promise you as much."

"Madame, you offer me a stepping-stone to the Cardinalate."

"Let our understanding never be disclosed; Madame is mischievous, and her attacks are not the less dangerous because they are hidden. To-morrow night you will come and give me an exact account of what you have done."

I had soon decided upon what steps to take in order to gain my Abbeys and the esteem of Madame de Maintenon, who described to me the immense dowry which the Duc de Chartres might expect. On the day after this mysterious interview, I repaired at an early hour to the Palais-Royal, and I wore such a diplomatic expression that the Prince cried:

"I foresee you have some purchase to propose to me; you could not fall more seasonably; the King has made me a present of a purse of two thousand louis for a new-year's gift."

"Indeed," said I, "there is a purchase in question; only it is you they wish to buy."

"Abbé, I am not fond of fools who jest."

"It is not a question of fools, Monseigneur, since the King offers to pay you what you are worth."

"To the devil with your precious jargon!"

"More precious than you think, since I offer you, with the full authority of the King, the hand of Mademoiselle de Blois . . ."

"Are you jesting? Or do you happen to be drunk this morning?"

"No more than you are, Monseigneur, and I beg you to accept with a good will, if you would not be forced to accept."

"To marry, Dubois? And it is you who advise that!"

"Why not; marriage is only a yoke so long as one cares to submit to it; you need only consider it in connection with the interest you find in it."

"What an outrage, to sacrifice my youth! 'Tis the first time in my life that I reflect on the insipid custom of sleeping always with the same woman, whom one often detests simply for that very reason."

"I guarantee, Monseigneur, that that condition will not be stipulated in the contract. Permit me to speak to you in the language of sincere friendship; by this entirely political marriage you bind closer your links of relationship with the King, you draw nearer the throne; it is within the bounds of probability that you may some day reach it . . ."

"Fine probability—the deaths of five or six young and healthy persons!"

"Indeed! As though it were only the sick who die! From another side, without weighing the amount of the dowry in the balance, you have the chance of recovering the Palatinate."

"Yes; burnt, pillaged, and made a desert by the armies of my father-in-law."

"Finally, he threatens to command it; he does not know such a thing as a refusal; not to obey with a good grace is at once to expose yourself to his resentment. To consent with a good will, however, assures you his friendship; and I repeat to you, because I am too much attached to you to think otherwise, that everything counsels you to consent."

"But, Dubois, Mademoiselle de Blois is a natural child. . . ."

"Legitimatised; and, as for that, will you be more scrupulous than the late Prince de Conti and Monsieur le Duc? Do not begin to share a prejudice of Madame, who has not yet shed all her German green-sickness. The bastards of a King of France are worth all the legitimate children of a Palatine

Elector. To conclude, is it nothing to have a pretty wife when so many others have ugly ones?"

"I have seen Mademoiselle de Blois several times, but have never paid any attention to her."

"You will have ample leisure after the ceremony."

This sufficiently free conversation, in which I had beaten the Prince on every point, left him in a gloom which was merely due to his disgust at seeing his dreams of a well-employed youth frustrated. The sour air of Monsieur convinced me that the Chevalier de Lorraine had not lost time. Towards midnight, I was again introduced into Madame de Maintenon's chamber, where I found Père La Chaise, who embraced me as a colleague. There was more embracing when I related the success of my operations.

"My dear Dubois," said the confessor, "God will reward you for your zeal."

"Yes; through the hands of Madame," I replied, smiling at Madame de Maintenon.

"Do you think it time," she asked, "for the King to act? He does not wish to appear in the affair, as you know, until he is sure of not meeting with a refusal."

"Madame," I replied, "M. le Duc de Chartres has already resolved to do what you like, but I know him well enough to desire him to see Mademoiselle de Blois first. She is said to be very beautiful."

"Who says that, pray?" retorted Madame de Maintenon; "she is a bad likeness of her mother; moreover, amongst princes, marriages do not depend on these trifles. Nevertheless, let the Duc be Chartres pay me a visit to-morrow; I will see that Mademoiselle de Blois is here."

The Prince, since my confidences, was giving way to a melancholy indifference, instead of profiting by the liberty which was left him. He consented to come to Madame de Maintenon, but with an indifference which grieved me so much that, had it not been for the disgrace of returning the money I had received, I should have united with him to oppose this marriage. The interview was cold and constrained; Mademoiselle de Blois struck me by her excessive shyness, and the Duc de Chartres did nothing to appease it; Madame de Maintenon charged herself with the questions and answers. The memory which has remained

with me of Mademoiselle de Blois is confused with the judgment I formed subsequently of Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans, after a closer acquaintance; I am afraid that the portrait I give of her may bear traces of my more recent observations.

Mademoiselle de Blois was, at this date, in her fifteenth year, and the physique had taken precocious developments with her at the expense of the moral qualities. She struck one as of moderate stature and badly built; her eyes had something of the King's about them; the mouth and teeth, the complexion and the bust attracted my attention, and although each of these features was really good, the union of them was unpleasing. It was her air of constraint, her perpetual blushes, her awkward tongue, which did not meet my approval, and I saw that the Prince shared my sentiments. It is true that she has greatly changed since then, and her mind has gained as much as she has lost in beauty. But I already suspected her predominant failing when I saw her lying so negligently across the knees of Madame de Maintenon, who was calling her her child. The Duc d'Orléans said to me on leaving:

"I shall have a hard task to wake the wits of that!"

"Leave it to time," I answered, without putting faith in my counsel.

Rumours began to circulate, and Madame was informed by her spies that something was being plotted against her. As the marriage of the Duc du Maine with her daughter had been previously projected, she imagined this to be still in question; and as it was reported to her that I went secretly by night to Madame de Maintenon, she suspected me of being the promoter of this infamy. She said this to Madame de Châteauthiers, her favourite. I was summoned in great haste, and ventured to confront the storm.

"Do you not blush, Monsieur l'Abbé?" she cried, when I entered.

"Madame, I shall only blush when I receive my Cardinal's hat," I answered firmly.

"Do you know of what you are accused?"

"Madame, I accuse nobody, not even myself."

The interview could not be carried on any longer on these lines, and the little fit of pride which had seized me when I found myself become a man of importance soon passed.

"M. Dubois," she said, in a passion, "you are an adept at the Old Woman's lessons; but understand that I will no more put up with her impertinences than with those of her lackeys. I have been told that they are plotting the marriage of my daughter with the Duc du Maine."

"Madame, I suppose your consent will be asked as a preliminary."

"Is that another fresh insult? Marry my daughter to the son of a strumpet! I would liefer die."

"I should be wrong, Madame, to express an opinion in your presence; but I vow such an alliance has never been more impossible than at this moment. They say that it is Mademoiselle de Charolais who is to wed the Duc du Maine."

"Let him marry the devil in person, if it seems good to him; but my daughter—never. Listen, Abbé, if I were to hear you betrayed me for the Old Woman, I would send you to the Isles Sainte-Marguerite, without any more ceremony."

"In any case, I wash my hands of whatever happens."

Monsieur and all his household had come to Versailles overnight; I went in the morning to the Duc de Chartres, whom I found gloomier than ever; he told me that he was resigned, although they might have waited to marry him until he desired to be. I encouraged him with a thousand reasons which moved him little. They came to tell him that the King commanded his presence; he rose slowly to go, and I followed him to the high gallery, talking, without exciting much attention from him. He met the young Saint-Simon, who suggested a game of *mail*.

"Monsieur," replied the Duc de Chartres, "I shall soon be sending my children to play with you." And he resumed his way. "M. Dubois," said the governor of M. de Saint-Simon to me, "do not forget me, if there is any place to bestow." I understood that the marriage was already known; I assumed an air of dignity, and went to await the result of the conference at the door of the King's closet.

These are details which the Duc de Chartres gave me. On arriving, he found Monsieur speaking in a low voice with the King, who came to meet him, and embraced him paternally.

"Monsieur," said he, "you are of an age to take a wife who will bear you descendants; the war which troubles Europe prevents

me from choosing her for you in foreign courts; but I wish to testify all my affection by offering you my daughter, Mademoiselle de Blois, whose two sisters have wedded Princes of the Blood; however, I do not pretend to coerce you, and you are at perfect liberty to accept or refuse."

These words were pronounced with an air of authority which admitted no withdrawal, and the Duc de Chartres answered, stammering, that His Majesty had only to command to be obeyed, that he gratefully accepted this illustrious alliance, but that his consent depended on that of Monsieur and Madame.

"That is my concern," replied the King; "only consent, and your father will set you the example."

"Surely," said Monsieur; "I thank His Majesty for the honour he does us."

"Then," said the King, "we only need the reply of Madame."

He sent for her; she had not been the last, doubtless, to learn what was passing, for she arrived immediately.

"Madame," said the King, conducting her by the hand to a seat, "I rely on you not to oppose an arrangement which Monsieur desires equally with the Duc de Chartres."

"It is a question of my son's marriage with a daughter of Mademoiselle de La Vallière," interrupted Madame.

"The matter is concluded," resumed the King severely, "and I should be displeased with you were you to prove less amenable than Monsieur and M. de Chartres."

"Since they wish it, I have nothing to say," she said, making a reverence.

She went out, and her son followed her as far as the gallery, where she perceived me.

"Abbé," she said, "I forbid you to appear in my presence"; "and you," she added, addressing her son, "stay with your precious adviser."

She went and shut herself up in her apartment, where Monsieur joined her. They quarrelled lengthily, and Madame said, apostrophising her family portraits:

"It is very apparent, Monsieur, that you have not a drop of blood Palatine in your veins. How else would you dare now to look these noble ancestors in the face?"

On the following day the dowry was declared, and the preparations for the marriage commanded.

Madame de Maintenon sent for me at an early hour, and said to me, with a joyous air:

"Well, well, Abbé, you have done marvels, and I see now that you are an able man."

"Madame," I replied, "good leaders make good soldiers."

"The only reproach I have to make you concerns religion, which is not where you chiefly shine."

"I am more ashamed than you think, and I will correct myself sooner or later."

"It is said that money makes men virtuous; this purse is only intended to incite you to become so. His Majesty will not forget you when the time and place comes; but he commands you to absent yourself during the marriage festivities. The German woman looks upon you as the author of everything; she is so revengeful that she might do you an ill turn. By the time of your return she will be appeased."

I protested my obedience, and went to take leave of the Prince, who said to me as I left him:

"I shall expect you, Abbé, a fortnight after the wedding, because my honeymoon will be of short duration; I do not mean to plume myself on my conjugal fidelity."

"In that case," I replied, "my services are indispensable to you."

I went to recruit at my Abbey of Airvault, where I lived like a canon, swearing my fill, exploiting the damsels of the neighbourhood, and living on new-laid eggs. During this period the wedding was celebrated, and a few days after the marriage of the Duc de Chartres, that of the Duc du Maine with Mademoiselle de Charolais was concluded. Madame de Maintenon was satisfied with having *bastardised* the Duc de Chartres, and during the rejoicings she often repeated:

"The vexation I have caused Madame has made me ten years younger!"

CHAPTER XV

DUBOIS RETURNS TO THE PALAIS-ROYAL—THE DUC DE CHARTRES AS A HUSBAND—THE GRATITUDE OF THE GREAT—STATE OF DUBOIS' FORTUNE IN 1692—THE SIEGE OF NAMUR—VAUBAN—THE GRAND-PRIOR OF FRANCE—M. DE ROSEN—BATTLE OF STEINKERQUE — DUBOIS' PROWESS — RETURN TO VERSAILLES

I LET some days pass after the marriage of the Duc de Chartres; then, judging the wounds to Madame's pride to be partly healed, I returned to Paris, to the Palais-Royal, fearing lest, by keeping myself too long out of sight, my pupil might shake off the yoke of my influence. I found the Prince in the same disposition towards me, as I had known him to bear; marriage had had no more influence over his friendship to me than over his volatile amours.

"Well, well, Dubois," he said, on seeing me, "I have taken all that is good in my wife; it is the turn of others now, my dear Abbé."

"What, Monseigneur! Is the honeymoon over already?"

"I do not know what you understand by the honeymoon in a political alliance; but, to tell you the truth, as Prince of the Blood, or simple subject of my father-in-law, I find the nuptial bed a silly thing; I am weary of it already."

"Oh, not yet, Monseigneur."

"Pray, have you returned more insolent than ever? But I forgive you, in expiation of the folly I committed in putting on the yoke of matrimony. However, I am as pleased with the Duchesse de Chartres as one can be with a legitimate spouse; I think we shall get on together; she is too indolent and not sufficiently *bourgeoise* to torment me with her jealousy. All things considered, woman with woman, she is as good as any other."

"I am relieved, Monseigneur, to see your wedding night has hardly whetted your appetite."

"The devil take your wedding night; you have not a moment

to yourself, and 'tis then you feel the grievous burden of greatness. But I want to present you to the Duchesse."

I submitted, and the Prince conducted me without ceremony into the apartment of the little Duchesse, who, stretched out nonchalantly on a couch, did not make a sound at our entrance.

"Madame," said the Duc, "this is the Abbé Dubois, my dear tutor, whom I beg you to welcome for my sake."

"An Abbé," said she, without looking at me; "the one who was employed about my marriage? I think I have seen him somewhere or other."

"I have had the honour of offering my services to your Highness, when you were still Mademoiselle de Blois."

"Very good; but my husband no longer needs a tutor, I suppose."

"Madame, the Abbé Dubois is not only a tutor, he is a useful man in more than one relation. Moreover, the King has desired that the Marquis d' Arcy should still remain my honorary governor, and M. Dubois will also retain his place."

"I am quite willing. Do you not find the weather very unpleasant? It is my day for the vapours."

The Prince understood this frank request to retire, and we saluted the Duchesse, who remained in the same state of immobility.

"Dubois," said the Duc de Chartres, as we went out, "I ask you to say what use one can make of such a sluggish piece?"

"What does it matter to you," I rejoined, "provided that she leaves you alone."

I was curious to know in what manner the King, who was so large in his recompenses, would acknowledge my services. I went to pay my respects to Madame de Maintenon, who received me from the pinnacle of her piety. She told me drily that she would let me know when I could be of service to her; and thereupon dismissed me, counselling me to reform my conduct and my religion, of which she had heard no praiseworthy accounts.

"Madame," I answered, impudently enough, "I am afraid of one sin only—scandal!"

I was inclined to suspect that the "old woman" had damaged me with the King. However, I risked the adventure; I went and put myself in ambush when they were issuing from the private table, and I arranged it in such fashion that the King noticed me at once. He accosted me with gracious dignity:

"Ah, it is you, M. Dubois," he said; "I am charmed to see you again. Tell me what we can do for you."

"Sire," I answered, without weighing my words, "your Majesty can make me a Cardinal; but the more powerful he be the less he can do," I added, seeing that my first sentence had made him knit his brow.

The King looked at me with more contempt than anger, and, without giving me a word, entered his closet, shrugging his shoulders.

"I did not expect such impudence," he said; "he would have done as well to ask me to make him King!"

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said the Père La Chaise to me, with a severe air, "if you are mad, go to the hospital; if you are not, you are taking the road to the Bastille."

The King did not reward me until the following year, by giving me the Abbey of Saint-Just, left vacant through the death of the Archbishop of Lyon.

This is the state of my fortune in 1692. Before entering the Palais-Royal, I had amassed a thousand louis by my savings; these I doubled, by lending them out at reasonable interest. In the lifetime of M. de Saint-Laurent I had only a thousand livres, afterwards fifteen hundred livres, as salary. When I became tutor I increased this to four thousand five hundred livres, not including presents. Two or three historical and geographical dissertations which the Duc de Chartres gave at Saint-Cloud, in presence of the Court, were worth sundry gratuities to me. The Prince, in the provisionment of his amours, permitted me, under the name of *Monseigneur Total*, to gain considerable sums which I did not spend. The Abbé Faure, my former master, having died, I solicited the rectorship of Saint-Michel, to prevent it falling into bad hands. It was granted me; but as the *résidence* would have compelled me to reside there, M. de Ségnelay, whom La Fontaine influenced in my favour, gave me a dispensation by writ of council, in consideration of my position with the Duc de Chartres. My salary was increased by fifteen hundred livres when I followed the Prince to the Siege of Mons. The protection of Monsieur was the cause of my being nominated to a canonry of Saint-Honoré, which carried with it the qualification of master of arts. Finally, the King, giving way to the importunate prayers of the Duc de Chartres, had abandoned me the Abbey of

Airvault, which had a noble revenue. This fine commencement presaged a fine end. Benefices—I will take as many of them as are to be had; they are the baubles which set off a man of wit.

The Duc de Chartres accompanied the King to the Siege of Namur, and I accompanied the Duc de Chartres. At Namur, I exposed myself with the most deliberate air, and more than once I followed the Duc de Chartres to the trenches, in the midst of a rain of bullets; in fact, I did all that I could to be killed or wounded. The King, it is true, was no more prudent; his hat was pierced by a musket ball.

"It seems," said he, laughing, "that the besieged have a grudge against my hat."

On another occasion I noticed a Dutch soldier who was aiming at the King:

"To the left, Sire," I cried.

Instead of retreating, all those who were near threw themselves in front of the King, who said calmly:

"It is only a bullet."

This bullet would have killed Monsieur outright, if it had not struck a bastion, which deadened it; it merely grazed the right arm of the Comte de Toulouse, and bruised him severely. The Duc de Chartres picked up the bullet, and loading a musket, said:

"Sire, these poor people have need of their ammunition; permit me to return them what they send."

He fired, and so skilfully, that the soldier, who, seeing the commotion in our group, imagined he had wounded the King, fell dead on the rampart.

"You are a skilled marksman," said Monseigneur to him.

Following my plan of conduct, which consisted in making powerful friends wherever they presented themselves, I attached myself to Vauban, who was as pleased with my conversation as I was with his. Vauban's heart and character belied his face; his eyes had an expression of brutality, almost of ferocity, which would have excited fear in any who did not know his mildness and humanity; for the rest, he justified the Duchesse du Maine's remark, when he was made a Maréchal of France, "He is a peasant hero." His prodigious worth detracted in nought from his modesty; his candour resembled shyness; he was too kind a man, and one would hardly believe the importance he set on the lives of those rascals who bear the musket, and let

themselves be killed for the highest price they can obtain. I have seen him involve the King in an expenditure of a thousand crowns, just to save a hundred soldiers; his urbanity never degenerated into flattery, and his frankness was so great that it led him to tell hard and dangerous truths, for which the King did not hold him in less esteem. He was of an antique virtue; the soldiers became his children, and all that he possessed belonged to them. It is strange that, in spite of the difference of our characters, we should have succeeded in contracting a friendship, so much so, that we would pass hours together conversing, within range of the cannon. With me, spiritual qualities, which seem to me almost useless, are replaced by intellectual ones. One day he conducted me to a lunette which had not yet been attacked.

"'Tis here," said he, "that we will take the place, and that within six days."

This prediction was realised. The Duc de Chartres, who, with his mania to know, or at least to learn everything, had not neglected the art of designing, was particularly anxious to have the advice of Vauban, who admired his quick understanding. They would spend evenings tracing plans and geometrical figures.

"Monseigneur," said Vauban one day, with the ardour of his ideas, "trace me a line of circumvallation in space and I will take the heavens."

"It will certainly not be by famine or scaling-ladders," said the Duc de Chartres.

At the Camp of Namur, I met once more with my first Mecœnas, the Duc de Vendôme, who had never seen me since, but casually.

"What, Abbé," said he, "you are playing at war?"

"Certainly, Monseigneur, can not an abbé do everything, even get children?"

"I can answer to you for that," replied the Grand-Prior of Vendôme, whom I had not hitherto encountered, as he lived far from Court, engrossed in the pleasures of the Temple. I know not whether it was that my face, lean, yellow, and fatigued, did not promise a boon companion worthy of his company; but he never invited me to the suppers he gave of nights, where he coupled wine with women of France. This brother of the Duc de

Vendôme had a mock clerical air about his person, if not in his conversation; he dubbed himself the supreme minister of Cythera, and the songs he composed were as good as those of Chaulieu, which are no good at all. He was a Court libertine, whose every vice was redeemed by a hundred fine qualities. He was courageous to the point of rashness, but none the less it has happened to him to leave the army on the eve of a battle in order to visit one of his mistresses. At first, he chose these from the best families, that he might not condescend, even in his amours. But his passion for Madame de Ludres, Canoness of Poussay, whom he shared with the King, disgusted him with these romantic attachments, which had been better applied to Astrea and Clelia. A sad accident, which he did not refute, finally limited his pleasures to the enjoyment of good cheer, wit, and the indolence which is his dominant quality. He was so fond of relating this adventure to everybody, that Palaprat, one of his boon companions, said:

"Monseigneur, you seem to want one of these ladies to ask you to prove your case."

The King, whose devotions were disturbed by these mundane fooleries, shut his mouth thus:

"Monsieur, who has not heard of Abelard?"

The text of the story, not the most authentic, but the most decent, is as follows:—

The Grand-Prior, when he was still only Chevalier de Vendôme, outraged the sensibility of a great lady who had treated him better than he deserved. I leave you to guess, if you can, who this great lady was, and what was the outrage he did her. We know that women are no more forgiving than the Church, and they will have their revenge at any price. One evening, when there was a reception at Versailles, a bat entered through the casement, and flitted round amongst the lustres and candles; the bird of night caused great alarm in the *salon*, and the ladies pushed towards the doors in flight. This tumult frightened the bat, which circled round more swiftly than ever, upset a few torches, and damaged a lady's head-dress. This lady was the ex-mistress of the Chevalier de Vendôme.

"Monsieur," she said, "lend me your sword, and let me bring this horrid beast to justice."

The Chevalier, dreaming of no treachery, drew the blade from

its sheath, and committed it to her fair hands. The bat had settled on a corner of the mirror at the end of the *salon*. The lady begs the Chevalier to second her in her enterprise; she mounts upon an arm-chair, supported by Monsieur de Vendôme; but at the moment when he is kissing her hand, less for love than for gallantry, she gives him a sword-thrust which reaches the part she aims at, with no intention of hurting him mortally.

"Ah, Madame," says he, still smiling, "you are cruelly severe to your friends."

And he falls back in a pool of his own blood.

The lady, giving no signs of consternation, cries out that the Chevalier de Vendôme has wounded himself; the victim of love is transported to his own hotel, and two days later the doctors declare that henceforth the patient will be virtuous willy-nilly. The beauty of the story is that the Grand-Prior always took the blame of his disastrous wound upon himself, and disdained to revenge himself for this feminine vengeance. He made the best of things, and replaced what he had lost as far as that was possible.

"If I were married," said he, "my wife would not have the effrontery to make me a father; at least, I should recognise my workmanship; the King of France could not say as much."

I had noticed, and had been told, that Racine, in order to acquit himself of his task as historian, left the camp when an assault took place, and took up a post of observation on a neighbouring height, outside the range of the artillery. There he directed his spy-glass upon Namur, and by this means wrote the history of the siege from the point of view of an onlooker. Under the pretence of trying his spy-glass, I filled it with grains of sand and dust, without Racine's knowledge. I had made a wager with Cavois that Racine could see nothing through his spy-glass, and that the time he wasted with it was no doubt employed in the composition of a tragedy. Cavois and I went and surprised the poet, who was reading a book, which he concealed on our approach; the spy-glass, directed at random, proved to me that he had not suspected my trick.

"Well," said Cavois, "are you not watching the attack that is just being made?"

"Certainly," said Racine; "but I am taking a breath." And he put his eye to the glass.

"You cannot see," said I.

"Excellently," he answered; "there is the company of the musketeers which is advancing; I can even make out the King, surrounded by his generals."

Cavois burst into a fit of laughter which disconcerted him, and the noise of the gravel made him suspect a jest; he soon had in his hand the fine things he had seen through the glass.

"I vow to you, gentlemen," he said good-humouredly, "that I thought I saw all I mentioned to you."

"And now, what do you see?" I interrupted.

"That the imagination is far less deceptive than the Abbé Dubois."

None the less, he put up his observing-glass again, in such wise that he could at least make out the place where they were fighting. Ashamed of his own prudence, which prevented him from seeing with his own eyes, he gave money to the soldiers, who told him a thousand old wives' tales; all these he packed into his history. I heard him one day question a Swiss who spoke broken French:

"You have come back from the advanced posts," said he; "tell me something new, and this piece of money is your own."

"*Tertaif!*" replied the man, "I don't know, me, what I saw; so please you? My comrade had his head cut off by a bullet. . . ."

"Good; and afterwards?"

"*Kurt*," said I, "you must come back to camp without your head. Is it all?"

"Thank you, my brave fellow." And behold Racine committing this buffoonery to writing for fear he should forget it.

The siege was being pressed with vigour, and whilst the Prince of Orange, at the head of the confederate army, was endeavouring to relieve Namur, the armies of the Maréchal de Luxembourg and the Marquis de Boufflers were harassing him on all sides. The besieged defended themselves with desperation, and each fresh fortification we seized from them seemed but to augment their resistance. The new Fort, well provided with men and ammunition, sustained several attacks, in which we lost many of our company; in the end, it was taken by assault in the night; Vauban had directed the attacks. On the morrow, when the garrison left to be escorted to Ghent, the Duc de Chartres, Vauban, a few gentlemen of the Court, and myself entered the fort to examine it more

nearly. We descended into a cellar, whither we were attracted by the sound of sobs. There we saw a hollow excavation, and a little old man in the deepest distress.

"Who are you?" asked the Duc de Chartres, "and what are you doing there?"

"I am Cohorn," he answered; "it was I who constructed this fort; I thought it impregnable, and I do not want to survive my dishonour."

"Monsieur," said Vauban, "the fortune of war cannot be foretold, and a defeat may be as fine as a victory."

"Ah, Monsieur, if I had been attacked in the ordinary manner, I should have defended myself for yet another fortnight."

"What you tell me," replied Vauban, "causes me inexpressible joy; it is true, I have not style, and merely trust to my eye."

"You are M. Vauban," cried Cohorn, leaping from his trench; "let me embrace my master."

Vauban opened his arms to him with an emotion which was shared by the onlookers.

"I hope that we may meet elsewhere," said the Dutch engineer.

He rejoined his troops, without caring to be bandaged, although his head was wounded by a fragment of a shell. The capitulation of Namur followed that of the New Fort. Three days afterwards, the King started for Versailles.

Amongst the persons whose memory will always be agreeable to me, I will not forget M. Rosen, who valued me so high, that he asked me to the dainty table which he kept in full camp, just as in the town. It was on this that all his revenue was squandered, and it was not sufficient. The King, who loved him, provided for his table-money. Rosen, as thin as he was tall, seemed like to break when he was walking; a bullet had broken his leg, and he retained a limping gait, which did not prevent him from making a good officer. I have never understood why, having so much wit, he should have made it a game to clip his words at every sentence. The King was amused at his indifference to correct speaking. Rosen, in spite of his coarse exterior, possessed a rare tact. He told me that if he had tried to model his speech on that of the courtiers he would have finished by being unable to understand himself. When he fought, moreover, it was apparent that he had been a soldier

before being a commander. The combat of Steinkerque brought the campaign to a glorious termination. It was truly a fine action; and the Duc de Chartres exposed himself so prominently to the hostile ranks that I did not deem it my duty to follow him at my own risk. I looked on myself as but barely half a soldier—a chaplain wearing a sword!

M. d'Arcy tried to use his authority as governor to moderate the Prince's ardour.

"*Corbleu!*" cried the latter, "I warn you that the only governor I recognise here is my sword."

"And if you are slain, Monseigneur, what shall I say to Monsieur?"

"Whatever you like," said the Prince.

And he galloped off into the thick of the *mêlée*. A huge devil of an Englishman threw himself upon him, pistol in hand. The bullet grazed the Duc de Chartres' arm, and he cried:

"Gentlemen, I am not wounded! Follow me!"

At the same moment, the Englishman, who was making again for the Duc de Chartres, fell dead.

"Monseigneur," said M. d'Arcy coldly, "if I had been at your side, you would not have been wounded."

"I am lucky to have escaped with so little," said the Duc de Chartres.

The courage of this Prince of eighteen surprised and excited the troops, who returned to the charge with renewed ardour. This movement renewed the battle; and whilst M. de Luxembourg, who had the gout, performed prodigies of valour and genius, the Prince de Conti, M. le Duc, the Duc de Vendôme, and the Grand-Prior at the head of the King's household, decided the victory.

"Gentlemen," said M. de Luxembourg to them after the action, "the Prince of Orange has had the honour of being beaten by the princes and nobility of France."

I did not remain, during the battle, hidden like Sosia in a tent, eating and drinking; I even incurred some peril. I was walking in the rear of the army, mighty concerned about the fortune of the day and the Duc de Chartres. A German soldier, who was fleeing, saw me, and rushed at me with an oath. I drew my sword and put myself in a position of defence; but the rogue had a sabre and a pistol, and I judged it prudent to make a com-

promise. I made him a friendly gesture, and held out my sword to him by the hilt; he advanced in the utmost good faith, and I sheathed it in his belly so rapidly, that he had not time to notice my politeness. After this fine feat of arms, I went and took refuge with our rear-guard. I gave such a magnificent account of my prowess to the Duc de Chartres that he embraced me, and called me the hero among abbés, to which I made answer that I was only the abbé of a hero. His wound was healed in a very few days. It is to him that the fashion of *Steinkerques* is due, a kind of cravat worn by women, because, in the hurry of the combat, the Duc de Chartres had tied his in a very negligent manner. This victory gave its name to many other trinkets, and the return of the princes was a veritable triumph, which excited the jealousy of the King. All along the road women ran out with flowers, magistrates with compliments, children with songs. One day when I was separated from the Prince, I know not for what reason, I owed a provincial conquest to the honour of having played my part at Steinkerque.

Our arrival at Versailles had the air of a triumph, and the Duc de Chartres, especially, was overwhelmed with congratulations. The King alone did not share the enthusiasm, and he met everybody with reproaches.

"Monsieur d' Arcy," said he, "why did you not have a care of your pupil's life?"

"Sire," replied the Marquis, "His Royal Highness left the duty of watching over his person to his sword, and a slight wound is rewarded by victory."

"And you, Monsieur l' Abbé," added the King, "I am told you conducted yourself like a soldier."

"Sire," I replied boldly, "the victory would have been finer if you had presided over it."

The King gave a poor reception to the Prince de Conti and M. le Duc. The Grand-Prior of France, who, in his quality of grandson to Henri IV, spoke with great freedom, said to Louis XIV:

"Sire, it was no painted battle!"

The Duc de Chartres had no time to become bored before the next campaign; his face, his rank, and the renown of his first feats of arms increased the number of his conquests amongst the great ladies, who, by dint of coquetry and excessive demands for

constancy, drove him back more than ever on my system of vulgar and transient amours. Madame la Duchesse de Chartres, as thoroughly indifferent to her husband as to everything else, seconded my notions as fully as if she had an understanding with me.

At the commencement of spring, the same princes, the same troops, the same general, and the same victory. In spite of the King's ill-humour, I thought it as well not to desert the fortunes of the Duc de Chartres. The Prince of Orange was surprised by our forced march on the village of Nerwinde, and no more terrible battle has ever been known out of the romances. The Prince's impetuosity did not allow me to take my place by his side. However, I had a caprice, as it were, to make myself illustrious; it was not arms I lacked. In the course of the action I heard cries of "the Prince of Orange!" and I saw a cavalier, who, after having routed two squadrons, rushed forward, followed at a distance by his company. I was on horseback, and, charging on him, I fired my pistol at random. I only struck the horse, which fell with the Prince, and there was a cry, "the Prince of Orange is taken!" But, finding myself alone against a host of the enemy which arrived at that moment, I decided to retreat, and the Duc de Chartres, who had seen me in the distance, said to me angrily:

"Why did you not kill him?"

"They would have killed me too."

"What does it matter? The war would have been over."

The Prince then rushed the trenches which the Prince of Orange had thrown up during the night. The Prince de Conti and M. le Duc were fighting like common soldiers. Twice was the Duc de Chartres surrounded, and within an ace of being taken prisoner; but in warfare rashness is almost as likely to preserve as to expose.

"Monseigneur," said I, when the fight was over, "who would believe that the eagle has been reared by a gosling."

"Your Royal Highness is too ready to expose yourself," said the Marquis d'Arcy, who did not apply my simile to himself.

"Monsieur d'Arcy," said the Prince, "the Prince of Orange, who is King of England, risks more than I do, who am as yet only the Duc de Chartres."

Louis XIV, whom old age, bigotry, and, above all, the

Maintenon, kept in idleness at Versailles, saw nothing in the day of Nerwinde but the glory of the princes, which wounded him. He was angered that there were any laurels in his kingdom for anyone but himself. Thus the conquerors of Nerwinde were disheartened by reproaches or indifference. When the Prince de Conti said to the King, pointing out M. de Luxembourg:

"Sire, that is the decorator of Notre-Dame."

Louis XIV replied:

"I advise you to inscribe your name on the flags taken at Steinkerque and at Nerwinde."

He said, moreover, to the Duc de Chartres, with a sardonic smile:

"Monsieur, as I am more interested in your life than in the death of two or three poor devils, I am going to confine you for several years in my Court, in order to teach you to exchange your courage for a little prudence."

In fact, neither the Prince de Conti, M. le Duc, nor the Duc de Chartres obtained permission to serve in the ensuing campaigns. The Duc de Chartres devoted these years of inaction to his pleasures; these were softer, though less dangerous combats.

CHAPTER XVI

MORTALITY—DEATH OF LA FONTAINE—OF THE PRINCESS OF ORANGE AND OF M. DE HARLAY, ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS—MADAME DE LESDIGUIÈRES—ILLNESS OF DUBOIS—DOCTOR CARRETTE AND HIS ELIXIR — THE QUARREL — THOMAS CORNEILLE—MIGNARD'S PORTRAIT OF MADAME DE MAINTENON —SAINTE-FRANÇOISE—MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ—MADAME DE COULANGES—GENTLEMAN OR MAJOR-DOMO—THE HANDS—DUBOIS' CREDIT SUFFERS

THE worthy La Fontaine only survived Madame de la Sablière, whom he loved as much as his cat and dog, two years. He expired after a long illness, during which the Père Pujet had succeeded in making the author of the *Tales*, by frightening him with the devil, a penitent in a hair-shirt. In the latter days of his life he almost entirely gave up seeing his friends, for fear of being reminded by them of the sins of his youth. I paid him a visit a few days before his death ; he was in bed, employed in pasting pictures of saints on all the pages of his *Tales*.

"You see," said he, "I am doing an act of contrition."

He had an old nurse by his side, who, with spectacles on nose, was reading her breviary; she raised her head when La Fontaine cried, with a groan:

"I am a great sinner!"

"Let it alone, Monsieur," she said; "the good God won't have the courage to damn you."

Poor La Fontaine had moments when he wandered. He suddenly asked me my name, and when I had told him, he apostrophised me in these words:

"Do you know the litanies for the dying?"

"No," said I.

"In that case, take yourself off."

Thereupon he turned his back on me abruptly, and obstinately refused to speak further to me, do what I might to persuade him. I rose to leave him, when he called me back, begging me

to repeat to him the fable of *The Dead Man and the Curate*; and, as I did not know it by heart, he commenced to recite it, laughing heartily.

"Is it not a singular story?" said he. "'Tis the first time a curate's stomach was ever turned by the dead."

"Instead of these gloomy ideas," said I, "you should have brighter thoughts."

"My dear Dubois," he replied, with tears in his eyes, "the excellent Molière died first; after me there will be still Boileau and Racine left."

I could not restrain my emotion, and I left him that I might not let it appear. Five days later he was buried in the cemetery of the Holy Innocents, in the same spot where Molière had been buried twenty years before.

The Princess of Orange, daughter of James II, also died, being still young and lovely. This news reached Versailles so unexpectedly, that it was thought to be as false as that which was brought to Madame at the same time, announcing that the Palatinate was flooded, and twenty thousand Germans drowned. Wagers, rendered fashionable by the King of England, were started on the subject of this death, which was still doubtful. When it was no longer possible to doubt it, the question of mourning was broached, and James II, more a king than a father under the circumstances, settled it in one word by forbidding it to be worn.

"She is my daughter no longer," he said, hiding his grief; "she is the wife of a rebel."

M. de Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, succumbed to an attack of apoplexy. He was the flower of gallants. He would sometimes leave his carriage and seek adventures in the streets of Paris. In spite of this licentious conduct, he long preserved the esteem and friendship of the King, to whose vices he pandered. When Madame de Maintenon was secretly intriguing for the publication of her marriage, he threw himself into the party of Louvois, and was involved in his disgrace. His ambition even exceeded his immorality; he was, moreover, a prelate of great wit. One day a preacher entered the pulpit, in presence of the King, and divided his sermon under four heads; but suddenly an urgent necessity, on which he had not counted, forced him to leave his post, and ask his audience's indulgence.

The Archbishop of Paris profited by his absence to begin a sermon on the four points which the other had laid down. The latter returned, and was amazed to find his task almost accomplished. It was not the only occasion on which M. de Harlay displayed his eloquence, which always won him the King's heart.

"That man," said Louis XIV, "is a demon in his private life; but he talks of Paradise like an angel."

The scandalous life he led, attracted the notice of the Holy See, which very nearly inhibited him. He was by no means particular about saying his mass, and he finished by ceasing to distinguish Sunday from the other days of the week. His temperament had imperious necessities, and many a fair penitent paid the pastoral tithe to him in kind. Besides these amours by the batch, he had two regular mistresses, who shared the episcopal throne with him, Madame de Bretonvilliers and Madame de Lesdiguières. This last, who devoured the Church's possessions without any scruples, lived almost maritally with him until his death. She never missed a procession, and flaunted in them with the airs of an archbishop in petticoats. It was in her arms that M. de Harlay was struck with apoplexy, after a hardly canonical debauch. Madame de Lesdiguières, for their common honour, did not call for help until she had saved Monseigneur's dignity by removing all the traces of their orgy. A certain Père Gaillard was charged with the funeral oration, in which he acquitted himself gallantly. He spoke of everything in this funeral discourse except of the dead prelate. The President de Harlay, his brother, by nature a scoffer, was none too much afflicted at his loss; his austerity was offended by the Archbishop's manner of life. I do not, however, believe he was guilty of the following verse, which was attributed to him :—

Harlay n'est plus : ce prince de l'Eglise
Dout l'âme fut à Vénus si soumise !
Paix !
Le Pape le canonise !
Lesdiguières en fait les frais.[1]

[1] To render the Version freely :

"Harlay 's no more : that prelate grave !
Whose soul was ever Venus' slave :
Peace may he have !
The Pope proclaims his saintly soul,
Lesdiguières will pay the toll." [*Translator's Note.*]

What with all this sickness and death, I did not perceive that my own health had rudely suffered; for, after all, one is not made of iron. My eternal ideas of ambition had heated my blood no less than had my amorous exploits. I had been led in my search of pleasures into doubtful haunts, and I often took there what I had far better have left alone. Finally, more even than the fatigue of overwork, my irascible humour had worn out the poor machine, and I began to see there was need to doctor myself seriously, under penalty of a general breakdown of my whole system. I was so thin that I looked like a skeleton, and it is a miracle that I was able to resist so long with such a frail appearance. A rigorous *régime* brought me back to life, and this rule, which I have never since infringed, has always made up for the excesses of my temperament.

It was the moment to lay hold of a physician, and it was a physician who laid hold of me. I say physician, but I ask the faculty's pardon for the phrase. It was an Italian quack named Carro-Carri, but he had made his name French by turning it into Carrette, in order to remove any prejudice that his nationality might have excited against him.

"Never did poisoner better know his trade."

He was sent to me, I know not by whom, and his golden tongue unloosed my purse-strings. He promised me enormous profits if I consented to go into partnership with him. He exacted payment, I may say, in the manner of those fellows who sell the secret of the philosopher's stone. I plead guilty for the vogue into which I brought him with the highest ranks of society; in fact, he gained large sums of money, which he honourably divided with me. His whole pharmacopia consisted of a certain elixir, on which he set an exorbitant price; the bottle cost ten crowns, I believe; and the Jew also sold cures in advance, prepared to remain everybody's debtor. However, fashion had established him in the favour of the ladies, and Carrette was indispensable to the slightest indisposition. His doctorial pride became so puffed up at a success which he owed to me, that he ennobled himself in despite of everyone; people laughed, but none the less went on consulting him.

Ingratitude soon induced him to break our association, and this viper, whom I had cherished in my breast, confessed to me

with vast regrets that he had decided to carry on his elixir and assassinations by himself. This was not all; he even tried to enrich himself at my expense. He respectfully presented me with a long apothecary's bill amounting to a total of 200 crowns.

"What is that?" I asked ingenuously.

"A little debt that I must beg you to discharge."

"It is you, you robber, who owe me a terrible debt of gratitude."

"Monsieur l'Abbé, I shall certainly honour it, as you will mine."

"But what are all these items?"

"The number of my visits, my dear master."

"What visits are you talking of, rascal?"

"They are marked down exactly since the first one, and I have not put them at their full value out of respect to you."

"What, you thief, you would make me pay for the nuisance of seeing your foolish face?"

"Am I not a physician, at your service, Monseigneur? It is no fault of mine if you are always in good health."

"No doubt, assassin, it is not the fault of your elixir if I am; the one glass I took very nearly served me as it has so many others."

"*Chè volete*, my good gentleman; if doctors always cured their patients, patients would cease to exist. Pay me, if you please."

"Listen, rogue; if you value your visits at three livres, for my part, I estimate each audience I have given you at a hundred livres."

My anger was about to flame out; he deemed it prudent to withdraw, and if he had not taken this course, I think I should have avenged all his patients at one stroke.

After this ridiculous scene I decried him as much as I had vaunted him at first, and his medical blunders did him as much harm as I could have done. He saw himself abandoned by all his clients, and some even made a mockery of his insolent vanity, like M. de Barbezioux, who sent for him to treat one of his watch-dogs. I, on my side, spared no pains to destroy my own work, and abused him so warmly that in less than no time all his reputation vanished in smoke. One of the first causes of his success was the mention the *Mercure Galant* made every month of his elixir; to put an end to these bought praises, I went myself to Visé, the author of this journal.

He was ill, and absent from Paris; I met, in his place, his colleague, Thomas Corneille, who received me with officious politeness, and promised to respect the motive of my call. M. Corneille had one of those good-humoured faces which are rarely deceptive. Although he was advanced in years, he seemed of robust health, and his Norman highly-coloured physiognomy rather bespoke the peasant than a distinguished man of letters. At this first interview I remarked his modesty, so lavish in others' praise, and although he made no parade of devotion, it was revealed in his least action. He seemed to me of an extreme sensibility, and he could not speak of his brother without the moisture coming to his eyes. He was a universal savant, and he spoke as freely of literature and the drama as of politics. When I informed him who I was, he redoubled his attentions, and I could not refrain from doing honour to his conversation.

"The *Mercure Galant*," said I, "must bring you a fine revenue?"

"No, Monsieur," he said; "M. de Visé and I find it difficult to support ourselves, especially since the last few years; I am alone charged with the direction of it, nevertheless I have the smallest share of the profits."

"The Gazette and the rhymed journal of Lorret cannot do you much harm, and, unless I have a bad memory, I have seen times when everybody wished to have his place in the *Mercure Galant*."

"In the time of Larrisoles and the piece of M. Boursault; but since the *Comédie sans Titre* was played, ten years ago, the taste of the day has greatly changed."

"No doubt you have a pension from the King?"

"None, Monsieur; since the death of Pierre, I have lived in obscurity, and comedians often refuse to play my pieces; yet I have my family and that of my late brother to support."

"Your counters as an academician can not be of much assistance to you?"

"My labour suffices for everything; for fifty years I have had a pen in my hand, and I often write night and day."

"I perceive, in fact, that the Chapelains are the best remunerated of all the wits; men of talent are forgotten."

"Because they forget to ask. In short, I am contented; my supplement to the Dictionary of the Academy, in two volumes in-folio, has just been appreciated beyond its deserts. I am

now finishing my large Dictionary of Geography, which will amount to as much as three folio volumes."

"This means enormous labour! One man's life hardly suffices for it."

"What would you say then of the great Universal Dictionary of M. Bayle, which is being printed in Holland? M. l'Abbé de Renaudot made a great mistake in opposing the publication of that noble work."

"I will speak to the King and to Monsieur, and I have no doubt but that the injustice of which you have been a victim will be repaired."

"I require nothing, so long as I preserve my eyesight. When the windows are closed, it will be a signal for leaving the house."

I paid a visit to a portrait of Madame de Maintenon painted by Mignard; all the Court went there; there is no one sensible enough to withstand the fashion. One was never greeted by anyone at Versailles but with the words: "Have you seen Mignard's *Sainte-Françoise*?"[1] In fact, the painter's flattery had disguised Madame de Maintenon as a saint, at the risk of the storm of jests which this burlesque involved. Mignard had a remarkable talent, but it did not bear analysis. His colours are marvellously varied, but one often does not know whether he desired to paint flesh or wood. This portrait, which attracted such a crowd, surpassed even that of Turenne. It was an angelic face, resembling, however, the model, thanks to the water of youth. The defects occurred chiefly in the composition, and the Roman *Sainte-Françoise*, in an ermine-lined mantle, was supremely grotesque. It was said, referring to this mantle, the distinctive mark of royalty, that Madame de Feuquières, Mignard's daughter, had asked the King if it might figure on the shoulders of Madame de Maintenon?

"Yes," replied the Monarch, "*Sainte-Françoise* fully deserves it."

Madame de Feuquières returned to the attack, no doubt at the Maintenon's instigation, and asked for the Queen's crown for the portrait.

"It is useless," said the King; "saints have no need of crowns."

While visiting the portrait, I found myself in the company of sundry persons whom I had already seen at Versailles. Madame de Sévigné and Madame de Coulanges accompanied the Abbé

[1] Françoise was the Christian name of Madame de Maintenon.

Tétu, and I took as much pleasure in observing them as in listening to their conversation.

Madame de Sévigné was no longer young, and did not conceal the fact; what there was of her testified to what she must have been at the time of her great beauty; her sixty-eight years, however, had not yet written the irreparable ravages on her countenance, and, as everyone knows, grace has no age. Her features retained their piquant irregularity, that something indefinable which one finds again in her grand-daughter, Madame de Simiane. Her figure was still erect and easy, and her eyes had never been more vivacious. I admired her mobile eyelids, and the little, square nose which had charmed her cousin Bussy de Rabutin, and, even more, the Comte de Toulouse. He often speaks of her with a religious admiration. The first words which issued from the lips of this lady would have attested her wit, had I been inclined to doubt it.

Madame de Coulanges was neither plain nor pretty; she was reaching an age when one ceases to be either; but none the less in her person, her smile, her lively and decided attitude there was something not unattractive. The numerous lovers of this lady had surrendered to her at first sight. She had considerable wit; it was a family inheritance, and I remember some of her epigrams which were more stinging than all the songs of Coulanges, her husband. She had the mania of vapours just then, and Carrette, who had extracted less money from her than he could have wished, ruined her health for good.

She was nicknamed the *Fly* at Court, the illusion being to her biting raillery. She let her tongue run loose, for fear, said she, of doing like the serpent, which is sometimes reduced to biting itself. Her religion was strictly limited, and once, when being seriously ill, she received extreme unction, she said to the priest: "That will be enough for two." Of all her passions, the most constant and the most turbulent was that for the Abbé Tétu de Belval.

When these three personages arrived, I was standing at some distance from the pictures, in order the better to judge the effect. Madame de Sévigné took me for a custodian, and the darkness of the corner where I had stationed myself contributed to the mistake.

"My good man," said she, "will you please explain the accessories of this picture to us?"

"I beg your pardon, Madame," said I, coming up to them, "I am not what you think me, but, none the less, I will tell you all I know."

"In truth, Monsieur," she replied, with a charming gaiety, "I see what a mistake I have made, and I beg you to excuse me. My short-sightedness has already deceived me grossly enough. Do you remember, Madame," she added, turning to her companion, "my adventure in the Château of Chaulnes? I had one of those travellers' hungers, which make your very bowels cry out, and there was no sign of dinner. I noticed a man at the other side of the room whom I took to be the major-domo: 'My good sir,' I said to him, without ceremony, 'it is one o'clock, serve the dinner, I beg you, and our appetite will reward you with a thousand thanksgivings.' The man looked at me with eyes so astonished that I became so myself before he replied: '*Mon Dieu*, Madame, I should be only too happy to ask you to dine with me. My name is Pécaudière; I am a gentleman, and my house is only two leagues from Landerneau.' I was quite confused at the politeness of this worthy gentleman of Basse-Brétagne, and, in order to punish myself for my clumsiness, I accepted an invitation to the most wearisome of state dinners, from Paris to Landerneau."

"'Sdeath, Madame," said the Abbé Tétu, with his wonted amiability, "I believe it *was* clumsiness for a woman of your age."

"My dear Tétu," said Madame de Sévigné, "you ought to take an occasional dose of opium for your coarseness."

They spoke of the picture. I gave my contribution; and, wonderful to relate, the Abbé talked little; in revenge, he scolded bitterly.

"You have such a bad temper," said Madame de Coulanges, "that I despair of ever curing you."

"We will have the Abbé appointed Bishop of the Incurables," said Madame de Sévigné.

The conversation turned to the hands of Madame de Maintenon.

"They were her most beautiful feature," said Madame de Sévigné, "and my daughter, Madame de Grignan, was so much in love with her hands that she wished the like to the Blessed Virgin."

"*Mon Dieu*," cried Madame de Coulanges, "what would she do with them? I defy her to make them pure."

Suddenly she perceived my own, which I was displaying without any affectation. If my vanity does not mislead me, she must have whispered to Madame de Sévigné: "Speaking of hands, observe Monsieur's"; and Madame de Sévigné approved the remark with a smile which I also appropriated unceremoniously. From the subject of hands we passed to the Ancients and the Moderns, whom Perrault and Boileau were setting at loggerheads.

"The Ancients were more beautiful," said Madame de Sévigné, "but we are the prettier."

"Madame, your mirror will tell you so," said I.

"That is a compliment," said she, "which reaches me twenty years too late."

We separated without knowing rightly what we thought of one another. We did not see Mignard, who was then painting the portrait of Louis XIV, for the tenth time, to serve as a pendant to that of *Sainte-Françoise.*

"You find me much aged?" asked the King.

"Sire," he answered, "I see a few more victories on your Majesty's brow."

During the three years which followed the Campaign of 1693, I was less often in attendance on the Duc de Chartres; whether because the Duchesse wished to remove me, or that the Prince was tired of my counsels, or, perhaps, that adroit rivals had succeeded in counterbalancing the influence I had acquired over my pupil's mind, I gravitated obscurely during these three interminable years round my master's star, and my credit suffered from this coldness. A distressing idea haunted me; I feared lest I should be brought to a halt half-way to fortune, and see my ambitious dreams brought to nothing. The distractions I sought in the ranks above and below me did not kill the worm of discontent, and it is due to my perseverance that I conquered again and again the affection and confidence of the Prince I had formed in my own image.

CHAPTER XVII

ORIGINS OF MASSILLON — HIS PORTRAIT AND CHARACTER—QUIETISM—MADAME GUYON—HER CONFESSOR, PÈRE LACOMBE—*PURE LOVE*—FÉNÉLON—BOSSUET—A SPIRITUAL GATHERING—DUBOIS AMONG THE ELECT—MADAME GUYON'S ARREST—THE END OF QUIETISM—NINON DE LENCLOS—HER PORTRAIT AT THE AGE OF EIGHTY

I HAD been in relations with Massillon when he left the Oratory, and I may mention that nothing has happened to break this friendship, which still exists. Massillon gave the promise, at this time, of all that he has since become, and I, at any rate, divined his talent long before it blazed on the stage of the Court. Bourdaloue had presented him to Madame de Maintenon, when quite young, and she received him inconsequently, save only for the consideration she gave to his clerical quality. Massillon, modest and shy, did not yet foresee that he was to fill a place by the side of Bossuet, Fénélon, Bourdaloue, and Mascaron; he did not even think of making use of friends and influence, and I myself was the first to entreat him to aim at the pulpit. He attributed my advice to the partiality of friendship, and gave no heed to it. I had heard him give a lecture at the Convent of Sainte-Magloire, and the praise I gave him had so little effect on his simplicity, that he secluded himself in the Monastery of Sept-Fonds, where he would have remained with Père Latour, General of the Oratorians, who wished to make a preacher and Abbé at Court.

Père Latour showed him the attachment of a father; it was probably not without reason. On his return to Paris, Massillon found me as he had left me, disposed to love him as a brother, although I was not the son of Père Latour.

I saw with pleasure that the monastic life he had led had disgusted him with retirement, and I congratulated him on his nascent ambition.

"My friend," said I, "'tis a plant that grows in all soils."

Certainly, if Massillon had not succeeded, it was because he had not wished to.

With Abbés, as with other men, appearance is of more service than desert, which only appeals to practised eyes. Massillon was rather a pretty Abbé than a handsome man, and now, even with his bishop's robes, he has one of those good faces which have no age, so long as they keep their freshness. He had such a fund of health in his vivacious eyes, in his fat, rosy cheeks, and his double chin, that the Versailles ladies, more intelligent than those of less quality, would have been pleased to interest themselves in his advancement. But this innocent Massillon never knew how to profit by his natural advantages, and as he had, and will ever have, a horror of scandal, he only sought his sustenance with ladies of frail virtue. He would have thought it a mortal sin to make a cuckold, and his prudishness resisted all I could say against so narrow a scheme of conscience.

He has often related to me the opportunities he missed owing to his scruples, and I said to him with pity: "You are an Abbé amongst a thousand." That is why he keeps his reputation for virtue intact, as it had been a relic, and I am forced to confess that he is an honest man to be unwilling to live at his neighbour's expense. All that, he would remind me, is but an affair of conduct; for, directly he was free from the functions of his office, he was once more the amiable man, the friend of pleasure. I have often taken him to parties of pleasure, at which he was a faithful devotee, and good cheer frightened him no more than the rest. Only, with a perfect mania, and as a last form of propriety, before sitting down at table, he removed his little collar, saying: "I return to animal life." These peccadilloes never transpired, and Massillon, respected and esteemed, is still the friend of Dubois, who passes for the most vicious and despicable of men.

Since Massillon abandoned the Sept-Fonds for the Court, he moved in the most distinguished society. His charming face, his noble manners, and his eloquence, reinforced by a sweet voice, combined to buy him appreciation. He was not yet illustrious, but he had reached the point of being noticeable; a little Abbé of the middle classes could not hope for better. Fénélon, especially, who had just been appointed Archbishop of Cambrai, showed him some affection, which was strengthened by their common love of Quietism.

This doctrine, which was neither so chimerical nor so ideal as they would have us believe, had been conceived by Madame Guyon, who arose as a new Saint Theresa. She was early left a widow, with fortune, beauty, a temperament, and a confessor. He was a monk of the name of Lacombe, and I leave you to imagine how a monk understands pure love! He excited all the senses of his penitent, either by his discourses or some other means; and behold Madame Guyon, a pious woman after her fashion, trapesing the country, saddled with her monk, preaching, arguing, and catching weak wits in the snares of her spirituality. Youthful brains caught fire, and the new adepts swam amid the delights of this new piety, and all for the greater glory of God.

Madame Guyon had a daughter mighty well trained in ecstasies, who talked without understanding of the entire abandonment of herself, of the silence of the soul, and of pure love. Switzerland, Savoy, and Dauphiny laughed at these mysteries, whose aim was a purely sensual one. This made a noise, and after five years of wandering and adventure, the Archbishop, who was no foe of external cults and impure love, dealt a terrible blow both at the inward cult and at pure love, by confining Madame Guyon and her daughter in the Convent of the Visitation. Cries of persecution were raised, and Quietism gained more strength thereby; there was a rush of folk to experience pure love.

Madame de Maintenon was fain to taste of it; and Fénélon, who, after having read the *Torrents* of Madame Guyon, had conceived a passion for her and her God, pleaded her cause so warmly with the favourite, that he procured her release from captivity. The confessor-monk, who was rotting in the Bastille, was forgotten, and the lucky Fénélon took his place as expounder of pure love. Fénélon, tutor to the Duc de Bourgogne, had one of those tender and poetic imaginations which are drawn to all things supernatural. He loved God as a mistress, and as it were reciprocally. A courtier as much as a priest, noble and well-favoured, there was no ecclesiastical dignity to which he might not aspire. He threw himself unreservedly into the arms of Madame Guyon; and the latter, in the hope of assuring herself of a support in all contingencies, made him her favourite proselyte.

Quietism was organised in Paris. Madame de Maintenon,

whom Fénélon had converted, was installed as patroness of their mystical assemblies, whither other great ladies were introduced in her train. Men were more easily admitted, and Racine, still enamoured of the Champmêlé, embraced the phantoms which were offered to his imagination. Madame Guyon preached; Madame de Maintenon preached; Fénelon preached,—all in the style of the Apocalypse; then prayer was offered; then pure love ran riot.

However, I am still at a loss for the key to the enigma.

Madame Guyon, ambitious, like every leader of a sect, grew in importance daily, beneath the aegis of her beloved Fénélon. She insinuated herself into Saint-Cyr, indoctrinated the young ladies, and gave umbrage to Godet, Bishop of Chartres, and confessor of Madame de Maintenon. He thought they were going to steal his penitent from him, and he contrived his intrigues so secretly, that Madame Guyon and her *dear son*, Fénélon, succumbed to them. However, the favour of the initiated was extreme, and the Duc de Bourgogne, tender and naïve as he had been made by Fénélon, let himself be moved by this pure love, which came near to take me captive also. Madame de Maintenon had steered the ship of Quietism so well, that the King would have fallen in with it, thinking no harm. It was the hatred of Bossuet for Fénélon that overthrew all his work.

Bossuet, for all his genius, lacked soul; he might have been the counterpart of Boileau. Gentle passions seemed to him despicable, and all his strength was steeped in pride and envy. All great men are so. He had, I believe, no reason to detest Fénélon, but the difference existing between their respective characters had alienated them from the outset.

Godet wrote to Madame de Maintenon that the "pure love" of Madame Guyon and Fénélon possessed all the infirmities of carnal love. Madame de Maintenon thought she had the right to be jealous, and complained to Bossuet of Fénélon's treachery, admitting herself to be a strayed sheep with all the ingenuousness in the world. Bossuet thundered like the voice of Jehovah on Mount Sinai, and war was declared against Quietism. Madame Guyon had foolishly placed her confidence in a lady of Saint-Cyr; it seems that the latter's revelations completed the ruin of the spiritualists' cause. Bossuet, skilled in the art of pathos, went and flung himself at the feet of the King, wept, stormed, begged,

and, under pretext of religion, obtained a *lettre-de-cachet* against Madame Guyon, who was warned in time.

Confusion seized the little flock; Fénélon made it his task to allay the storm, and all this time Madame Guyon lay hid in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, notwithstanding that she had been commanded to leave Paris, under pain of imprisonment. Things were in this position, when the idea came to Massillon to make me a Quietist. In the crisis, recruits for initiation were being sought on all sides, and there was a diligent levy of bucklers for Madame Guyon's defence against her powerful and unknown enemies. The town and the Court interested themselves in a religious quarrel, of which Bossuet and Fénélon were the leaders. The Bishop of Chartres behaved like a true Jesuit in this affair; he even made a pretence of espousing the cause of Madame Guyon, who had no suspicion that treason was so near her.

"Dubois," said Massillon to me, "will you assist to-night at an assembly of the Quietists?"

"Willingly," said I; "I am entirely for pure love, and if Madame Guyon is as I imagine her, we shall understand one another without the need of words."

"You jest; but if you had drunk at the spring-head, as I have done, you would set no bounds to your admiration of their noble spirituality."

"'Tis my nature to love spiritual folk and matters. Between ourselves, the substance of Quietism is more mundane than is believed; I see an allegory beneath. We will judge of it this very night; we shall be in excellent company. M. Fénélon will preside."

We repaired at nightfall to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and I discovered that Massillon was an initiate of long-standing. He stopped before a big gate, gave three knocks, and led me into an adjacent street, where we found another small gate which closed behind us. The hooded figure of a man drew near to reconnoitre us; he raised his lantern to a level with our faces. Massillon, in a grave voice, pronounced these words: "The woman shall be pregnant with the spirit that is within, and the serpent shall stand erect before her."

After this Biblical recommendation, the Cerberus allowed us to go upstairs. We arrived in a vast apartment, which was dimly illuminated. From the silence which ruled there, one would not

have believed the assembly to have been so numerous. Men and women of all ages were ranged in a circle round a woman who stood veiled and motionless. At the first glance, I recognised many people of the very highest rank—Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Beauvilliers, the Duchesse de Mortemart, Madame de Marstein, the Comtesse de Guiche; Messieurs Léchelle, Dupuis, Racine, and others. I leant over to ask in Massillon's ear what one had to do.

"Listen, and exalt your soul," he replied. The comedy began. Madame Guyon raised her veil, and displayed a beauty that was still fresh and heavenly. She rolled her large eyes, clasped her hands, shed tears, and delivered an harangue, couched in allegorical language, of which I did not understand a single word. All the company repeated: "Adorable Jesus, love us even as we love you!"

Massillon told me in a whisper, that they were about to make me one of the elect. I was made to sit opposite Madame Guyon, who took my hands in hers, and cast an inflamed gaze upon me, which should have reduced my heart to cinders. I know not whether she perceived the mystery had produced its effect, but she cried out in an inspired voice: "I am about to empty myself of superabundant grace to fill the body of this elect one." I then saw her grow red, and then pale, roll dying eyes, choke, sigh, and fall prostrate, saying: "Enough; I am dying; unlace me!"

Madame de Chevreuse took her in her arms and carried her into another room. It appeared as though she were going to give up the ghost.

Fénélon arrived without greeting anyone; he went straight towards a big man, who sat apart in a corner. It was the Bishop of Chartres. I had recovered from my initiation, and I paid some attention to the faces. The Bishop had a slovenly and suspicious look; his face alone did not participate in the general plumpness of his person, and his hollow eyes, beneath their heavy brows, strayed foolishly to the floor. Fénélon, on the contrary, all curled and gallant, had just come from his toilette; he had not a movement which was not studied, and although his costume was one of extreme simplicity, one saw from a sort of elegance how much coquetry this simplicity contained: in conclusion, a kind of physiognomy passably monotonous, and a mouth which never smiled.

He sat down brusquely by the side of Godet, spoke in his ear, then in a low voice, then out loud, as the conversation grew warmer. "The house is watched," he said. At these words the devotees of either sex are in a hubbub; there is talking, shouting, running about, and it is as much as Fénélon can do to obtain a moment's silence. "My brethren, what are you afraid of? Is not the divine Jesus in the midst of us?"

Madame Guyon reappeared, somewhat calmer; people pressed round her and were silent. "Oh, what an admirable ecstasy I have had," she cried softly; "the soul of Jesus Christ was united with my soul; I really espoused him, and I remember an angel came to tempt me. Depart, I said to him, the mistress of the house has no concern with the servants." Alarm gave way to mysticism, and if the Heavens had fallen no one would have heeded it.

"Brethren," said Madame la Duchesse de Mortemart, "I have had two ecstasies this night. An angel appeared to me, bearing a pitcher of water and a little stove to burn Paradise and extinguish Hell."

"Sublime figure of Quietism . . ." cried Fénélon.

A noise which was heard on the stairs put an end to these follies, which Massillon was drinking in with both ears; soldiers appeared at the door, and a police officer, armed with a *lettre-de-cachet*, advanced into the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "do not be disturbed, the order, of which I am the bearer, only concerns Jeanne Rouvier de Lamotte, the widow Guyon, whom I arrest in the King's name."

A concert of lamentations burst out from every side. It might have been the abomination of desolation predicted by the prophet Daniel. "Our mother! our daughter! our sister! our friend!" Everybody was shouting, and Madame Guyon, retaining all her tranquillity, sought to console them with vague harangues.

"Lovers of God," she said, "I have foretold to you that hell would rise up to hinder the progress of the inward life and the formation of Jesus Christ in men's souls. The storm will be such that not one stone will be left upon another, and in all the earth there shall be trouble, war, and upheavals."

There was neither trouble, war, nor upheaval. Madame Guyon was confined at Vincennes, afterwards in the Bastille, where she

employed herself in composing commentaries on the Bible, and reflections concerning the inward life, as well as (to speak like the Quietists) "spiritual" poems. Fénélon was banished shortly afterwards to his diocese, and censured by the Pope for his *Maxims of the Saints*. Thus Bossuet triumphed over Quietism, which afforded me a delicious moment. Massillon always hid from me the secret of pure love, doubtless because he did not know it himself. I confess, for my part, it is entirely pleasant to receive grace from a pretty woman's hands.

Mademoiselle de Lenclos understood pure love in another fashion to Madame Guyon. She said, with regard to that visionary, that one did not need a body to be enamoured of God. In her youth Ninon only received men; in her old age her house was the rendezvous of the best society. I was presented to her by Massillon, who did not believe that, in frequenting her concerts and philosophic evenings, he was infringing the canons of the Church. I took such pleasure in her society that for two years I never failed to visit her twice a week. Seeing Ninon at the age of eighty, I was astonished that she had not still as many lovers as when she was twenty. I had proof that she did not want them.

Her beauty, by candle-light, was as great as in her prime, if it was not that her figure had lost something of its grace. Her complexion was so white and fresh and harmonious, that I asked her for a drop of her water of youth. "Wash yourself with sow's milk," she told me. I thought this was a jest; but the Abbé de Châteauneuf has since assured me that it was to this expedient she owed the preservation of her charms. Her face, of a lovely oval, had the purity of a Greek statue, her black and flashing eyes spoke a feeling of pleasure that was infectious, and her smile completed the work her glance had begun. Finally, her slow and honeyed voice went to the heart and beyond.

One experienced a feeling of pleasure merely at the sight of her. Chaulieu tried to make a paradox by saying that love had made his abode in the very wrinkles of her forehead. For this to be true Ninon had need first to have had wrinkles. She was admirable when she talked reason; she was admirable again when she spoke nonsense. She held a court with the same ease with which of old she had kept a male seraglio; young folk came to form themselves in her school, to take lessons in

politeness from her conversation and learn the fine manners of Court: for Ninon was of the nature of a touch-stone, and as she had never frequented any but great seigneurs she had made their elegance and nobility her own. Her amours had been public and often scandalous; but there had been a veneer of wit over all her past conduct, which caused it to be forgotten. Women relaxed their prudery so far as to attach themselves to Mademoiselle de Lenclos, and I can testify that this attachment was quite disinterested. Ninon would never have been guilty of such an infidelity to men. Such a prestige of celebrity and such enthusiasm for a woman of eighty is difficult to understand.

I confess, without a blush, that I formed a plan of attack against the repose which Ninon enjoyed, and I would fain persuade her she was younger than she thought.

"You come too late," she said to me, smiling, with that air which attracts instead of repelling.

A few days later I was informed of the true signification of this phrase, which I should have repelled indignantly, defending her against herself. I was not the only one who flattered himself he would renew Ninon's great days.

The Abbé Gédoyn, a kinsman of Mademoiselle de Lenclos, resolved to knit still closer the bonds of kinsmanship. He was not more than twenty-three, and was no Adonis; short of stature, with small eyes, a ruddy colour, and kindness in every feature. He gave the promise, at that time, of what he has become since: all candour, honesty, and merit. Such he appeared in Ninon's eyes; she took pity on the rust of the seminary, which spoiled his excellent qualities, and put his innocence to a rude test; a glance taught him that he had a heart. Ninon directed the whole arsenal of her coquetry against a child who did not know what a woman was. I, myself, who had wished to leap over all the preliminaries, paid no attention to this understanding of glance and speech. At last she revealed the whole to us with a *naiveté* which brought a blush to the cheek of several Court prudes, who apparently looked upon love as a forbidden fruit.

"Gentlemen," she said to us one evening, "you would never guess why the Abbé Gédoyn is not with us to-day? He is so tired out with his first conquest that he has taken to his bed. You know, or you do not know, that poor Gédoyn, who, on arriving here, knew nothing but his breviary, took it into his head

to fall in love with me. He followed the example of his fathers; for if Chapelle pushed hyperbole too far when he said that I have been to bed with Plato, it is none the less true that the Maréchal de Richelieu has been to bed with me—that was fifty years ago. The Abbé was wasting away, I did not wish to be cruel for the first time in my life; I permitted him to love me. As he was in a humour to profit by my permission that same instant, I postponed him, not to the Greek kalends but to that day two months. It was this morning that he presented himself to me to reclaim my promise; this time it was no question of a bill, as in the case of La Châtre, but of a word of honour. I was awaiting him on my sofa, and my word was redeemed. Dear Gédoyn was intoxicated, he kissed my hands, my feet, I know not what! At last he gave me a tender reproach.

"'Graceless one! Why have you made me languish all this time?'

"Alas, my little Abbé," said I, "my tenderness has suffered as much as yours, but my self-conceit was stronger. I wished, from the rarity of the event, not to surrender to you before I was turned eighty years old, and that happened only this morning.

"'Do not remind me,' he rejoined, 'of something I had forgotten, and promise never to leave me.'

"You ask too much, Abbé," I replied; "I assure you I left the first the Colignys, the Villarceaux, the Sévigné's, the Condé's, the d'Albrets, the La Rochefoucault, the d'Effiats . . . "

I interrupted Ninon in this catalogue of names, to ask her why she put them all in the plural.

"Do you not know your history of France, M. Dubois?" she answered; "how should I judge of a family by a single specimen? To return to my adventure, Gédoyn is the happiest of men, and I should be indeed hard to please, if I were not the happiest of women. It will last as long as it can."

The rupture did not take place till a year afterwards, and if I had been there, I am sure I should have had my share of what was left of Ninon de Lenclos.

CHAPTER XVIII

DEATH OF THE MARQUIS D'ARCY—THE DUC DE CHARTRES AND HIS SISTER—THEIR ILLICIT LOVE—MARRIAGE OF THE LATTER—THE MAID OF HONOUR — MADAME DE VENTADOUR — THE LADIES OF THE OPERA — DUBOIS BEHIND THE SCENES — MADEMOISELLE MAUPIN—DUMESNIL—THE CONVENT—CANE AND SWORD—MONSIEUR'S BALL—THE DUEL—DESCOTEAUX—BARON—THE DUC DE CHARTRES AND THE ACTRESS

THE Prince and I were left without a governor after 1694. The Marquis d'Arcy died that year at Maubeuge. I confess, I did not lament him; he was a brave man, and of an agreeable conversation, but he was fit to make nothing of the Prince but a paladin. Thus he was never really in the exercise of his functions except at the war, and everywhere else he left me to direct our pupil, whom I had no difficulty in reconciling to the sweetness of peace.

Mademoiselle d'Orléans, who has not yet appeared in these memoirs, because I had scarcely seen her, had no resemblance with her brother. The scandalous gossip of the day said that she had the blood royal in her veins, and that a *tête-à-tête* of Madame with Louis XIV had not been without consequences. Mademoiselle Elisabeth-Charlotte had some features resembling the King's, but lost in the national ugliness of her mother. She even fell off as she grew up, and her fine skin became brown and coarse. At the age of fifteen she had an aged and ailing appearance; her big round nose and her deep-set eyes rendered her face disagreeable and common. She redeemed by her wit, talents, and manners these natural defects, which have only increased with age.

She had been brought up by Mesdames Clérembault and d'Effiat, who occupied themselves little with her until she was of an age when the child is merged in the woman. She was abandoned to careless and uneducated servants. Madame, incessantly busied, as I have related, with her interminable letters and her family portraits, took little thought of what became of her

daughter, and only saw her when it pleased her governess to bring her. Monsieur was much attached to his children, but troubled himself as little about them. He sometimes embraced his daughter, who had no filial tenderness for him.

"Let me go, Monsieur," she would say; "I don't want to be kissed."

Monsieur, half annoyed, did not answer, but went and complained sorrowfully to Madame that her children loved her better than himself. He related to her Mademoiselle d'Orléans' hardly affectionate reception of him.

"*Mon Dieu*, Monsieur!" Madame replied, "why do you not correct them? They are your children as much as mine."

"I should not know how to scold them," he answered, "and they are not afraid of me; they only fear you."

Monsieur went and forgot his paternal grievances with the Chevalier de Lorraine and Madame de Grancey; Madame wrote her thousand and first letter; and, in the meantime, Mademoiselle d'Orléans felt the effects of such an education.

Her brother saw her often; latterly every day. The first time that I accompanied the Duc de Chartres to see his sister, they were both still so young that I paid no attention to certain indications which I remembered later; they gazed at each other long and with a singular expression; they whispered in each other's ears, laughed, turned red and white, embraced each other; it was something more than brotherly affection. I was, as any other would have been in my place, an inconvenient witness. The good pleasure of Mademoiselle forbade me to continue my observations. I soon perceived that she was throwing angry glances at me; they vexed me but little. The efforts which were made to injure me, and oust me from the Palais-Royal, left me in ignorance of my secret enemy, and it was not till 1698 that I recognised Mademoiselle d'Orléans as the voluntary cause of all that had been done against me. She would have finished by entirely destroying my credit with the Duc de Chartres.

This is why she wished me so much harm. By a childish compact, the Duc de Chartres rendered his sister an account of all his actions as well as of all his thoughts; she also concealed nothing from him; but the Prince's confession was doubtless of a different nature to her own. Necessarily, I played a great part in it, in virtue of my mysterious functions; briefly, the Prince

succeeded in giving me a villanous reputation. The particular services I rendered him, by purveying to his amours, revolted his sister, who implored him to dismiss me, and consequently to dispense with my ministry. It was her own cause she pleaded. I am grateful to my pupil for having resisted her pressing and reiterated supplications, and for not having sacrificed Dubois to love.

Yes, I shudder to write it, but it was love which reigned between brother and sister, doubtless a pure and virtuous love, a fashion of Quietism. In truth, I have not been present at all their interviews; but I am too well aware of the sentiments of the Duc de Chartres not to be able to certify that this love, however unfortunate and illegitimate, remained always as innocent as the affection, even more illegitimate, which has since been attributed to him for his daughter. Monstrous passions pursued him, but he did not go after them. Mademoiselle burned with like fires, but a hundred times more ardent, because they were concentrated on one and the same person. The Duc de Chartres, always devoted to change, sought in new passions a remedy for the one which at the bottom of his soul he shrunk from. He has never confessed it to me. I see, in this discretion, a proof of the esteem he had for my principles; all my compromises with conscience would not have gone as far as incest.

Madame, who, when she made a point of employing subtlety and perspicacity, had more of these qualities than anyone, soon discovered this secret love. She regretted, in spite of all her prejudices against *mésalliances*, that she had not married her daughter to the Duc du Maine, according to the King's wish. She sought in all her Courts of Europe to find a good marriage; it was all done suddenly; but the war of the allies frustrated this prudent determination. It was necessary to wait a year, and Louis XIV, to whom Madame revealed the causes of her grief, started in search of a Prince who would be ready to receive an ugly princess and the Protection of the King of France. A strange discovery urged them to hasten on their search for a husband.

Mademoiselle d'Orléans, knowing the projects that were being formed for an alliance for her, languished for some time, and fell grievously ill. The doctors, who do not feel the pulses of the heart, reassured Madame, who was anxious about her daughter's

condition. During this illness, the Duc de Chartres received the King's command not to visit his sister. This absence redoubled Mademoiselle's despair; she thought herself on the point of death, and resolved to destroy all traces of her deplorable passion. She wore round her body a belt containing the letters written to her by the Duc de Chartres; these must perish with her. One night, when the lady who watched by her bed had fallen asleep, she rose softly, collected the precious papers into a heap and set fire to them. The flames aroused her nurse, who uttered dire screams. Madame, hearing them, rushed in, in tears, expecting to find her daughter dead; she saw her surrounded by a mass of flaming papers, impatiently waiting for them to be reduced to ashes. Madame, with that presence of mind which she has frequently given instances of, flung herself upon the half-burned letters; and, in spite of her daughter's efforts to snatch them from her, she read there the evidence of that criminal love she was still endeavouring to doubt. The emotion displayed by Mademoiselle d'Orléans it would be impossible to describe; she threw herself at her mother's knees, begged her pardon with tears, cries, and groans. This crisis recalled her to life and health.

Louis XIV, whom Madame had informed, turned his eyes towards the son of the last Duc de Lorraine, whom he reinstated in his father's possessions on the signature of his marriage with Mademoiselle d'Orléans. The latter, having no more hope of indulging in her love with impunity, agreed to the alliance, and her resignation was more virtuous than her conduct had been. The Duc de Chartres raged at first, swore that this union should never take place, but was finally appeased, after a private interview with his mother, who treated him very harshly. An uninterrupted series of adventures of all ages left him no time to regret his loss. The marriage was celebrated sorrowfully and silently. The Duchesse de Lorraine never succeeded in conquering an attachment which had been stronger than any family tie. She, nevertheless, bore her husband numerous children, all of whom had a certain resemblance to the Duc de Chartres.

One day, at a time when I was innocent enough not to guess the brother and sister's position, I sought out the Duc de Chartres, whom I found more morose than ever.

"Well, my procurer," said he, forcing a smile, "has the hunt found a quarry?"

"I have your affair, Monseigneur," said I, looking pleased with myself; "this time I have laboured in the great world."

"Good; you have no more *grisettes* in hand then?"

"It is a bad year, Monseigneur; they become rarer every day; the great nobles make terrible ravages in them."

"So you have fallen upon an actress?"

"I was not reduced to such an extremity; I offer you a maid-of-honour."

"Of honour; and what do you expect me to do with her?"

"Anything you like. But let me not deceive you; I only mean a maid-of-honour to Madame."

"How is it I have not noticed her amongst all the Bavarian hideousness with which Madame is surrounded."

"The reason is, that she arrived yesterday. Her kinswoman, Madame de Ventadour, procured her appointment, and I hope the little one has the family virtues. Her name is Nathalie de La Bessière, and she calls herself Mademoiselle de Sery, under the pretext that it suits her better. Her father, who was ambassador to Holland, has not fortune enough to marry her."

"I will charge myself with the marriage expenses, reserving to myself the *droit de seigneur*, provided she is pretty; on that condition I would be every woman's lover."

"But not all at the same time, no doubt. Briefly, the arrangements are already made; the maid-of-honour has no more honour than is requisite, and to-morrow you shall be the judge."

The Duc de Chartres gave me a thousand caresses, and, as usual, put his destiny in my hands.

This Demoiselle de Sery had been pointed out to me by the Abbé Brigaut, her kinsman, and also that of Madame de Ventadour. This Abbé was nothing more than an adventurer; no one knew whence he came nor what he was. Madame de Ventadour and Monseigneur had held him over the baptismal font, and he made use of this spiritual paternity to assault fortune in every manner. He was still quite young, and had tried all the trades. He began by playing piety, until he had become a brother of the Oratory; but, disgusted at attaining no ecclesiastical honours, he became a ne'er-do-well once more, in the eyes of the Church, and made large profits by the sale of women. In spite of, or perhaps because of, this rascally trade, he was received everywhere, and his

godmother, Madame de Ventadour, was sometimes a party to his bargains.

Madame de Ventadour, who was lady of honour to the two Madames, before becoming the young King's governess, had justified the prophecy of the Abbé de La Victoire, who said to her on his wedding night: "Madame, it is not likely you would refuse to others what you would grant to M. de Ventadour." Indeed, it would be no easy matter to find a more hideous or deformed husband; and Madame de Ventadour, who was pretty and shapely, had not the strength to resist the Abbé de La Victoire, nor a thousand others, abbés or laymen. Old age and the convent alone could make her virtuous; and, in the decent phrase of M. de Ventadour, his *honour* was not so much *damaged* as his wife could have wished. I do not accuse Madame de Ventadour of having brought her neice with the intention of establishing her as the Duc de Chartres' mistress; but everything tends to make me believe it.

The Abbé Brigaut, who was aware of my relations with the Prince, advised me of Mademoiselle de Sery's arrival, and the praises he sang of her were only with intent to induce me to see her. Moreover, the fancy name that had been given her was sufficient evidence that they wished to respect her family name. Brigaut procured me an interview with Mademoiselle de Sery, to give me leisure to appreciate her means of pleasing. This young lady, who now figures under the style of Comtesse d' Argenton, and is no longer even pretty, had an attractive face at that time, rebellious eyes, a fine figure and wit. She did not bewray an Agnes of the provinces, and, as though Madame, her aunt, had prepared her in advance, she did not play the prude when I spoke to her of what the Duc de Chartres expected of her.

"Why does he wait?" she said, with eyes of intelligence.

These handsome dispositions did not diminish at the supper which the Prince made her accept; I was not present at it, but five months later I perceived, like everyone else, what had passed at dessert. Madame, who had an eye for everything, was as clear-sighted as myself. Mademoiselle de Sery's waist was too expansive for a maid-of-honour's. Moreover, the lavishness of her life, the money which poured through her hands, gave a handle to slander. Madame desired to have some light on the subject.

Madame de Ventadour was summoned; she denied the pregnancy of her kinswoman:

"We must question the Abbé Brigaut," she said, "who was the first to see my niece on her arrival here."

The Abbé Brigaut swore by all his gods that he was innocent.

"I will wager," said he, "that the Abbé Dubois, who knows everything, will be able to tell us something about the matter."

I appeared in my turn before my judge, and had little trouble to make myself out as white as snow.

"Meseems, Madame," said I, "that Monseigneur le Duc de Chartres is skilled enough in medicine to decide whether Mademoiselle de Sery be pregnant or not."

M. le Duc de Chartres was sent for; and Madame, with imperturbable coolness, questioned him on a matter upon which he alone could shed light.

"*Mon Dieu*, Madame," said he to his mother, "it is no business of mine, and Mademoiselle de Sery will be better able than anybody to answer these questions."

Madame ended in the quarter where she should have commenced; Mademoiselle de Sery arrived, pale and tremulous; she wept, stammered, and confessed everything.

"Now," said Madame, "I hope you are not going to be brought to bed in my house. Philippe, this concerns you."

The Duc de Chartres was afraid of being saddled with an irremovable mistress. However, the greatness of his soul won the day with him; Mademoiselle de Sery had her hotel, her servants and equipages. Her son was the Chevalier d'Orléans. For long she maintained herself in the position of favourite Sultana, multiplying her infidelities; her lover was never behind her in this matter.

What devices have I not imagined to counteract the empire which Mademoiselle de Sery acquired over the Prince? The young lady had particular and infallible methods of dominating, and the Duc de Chartres perceived when he left her that he had been led to subordinate his will to hers.

"The cunning of the baggage," he said to me; "she knew my good-tempered moments."

This was a notification which I did not let slip, and later I knew how to turn the Prince's good-tempered moments to my advantage. Meanwhile, in order to be rid of Mademoiselle de

Sery, who destroyed my peace of mind more than she hurt me, I called to my aid the prettiest faces I could unearth. After mature reflection, I chose a dancer at the Opera. I had a great opinion of these princesses, not that I knew them at first hand at this period; but musketeers and great lords spoke of them with unequivocal praise. Descoteaux, the famous flute-player, whom I had met for the first time at the house of the Prince de Conti, said these words to me, on the subject, which I have since held for a proverb:

"Love is found at every street corner; there is only pleasure at the Opera."

I started my campaign, therefore, mighty curious to test the royal morsels I was about to bargain with; the rank I held at the Palais-Royal permitted me to penetrate to the sanctuary behind the scenes. It was a country I had never seen but at a distance. I had not thought proper to be escorted by one of the eunuchs of the seraglio; I was fittingly attired in an abbé's costume, as a seeker of adventures. I strolled about for some time, an observer, in the midst of the decorations. The opera they were giving that night was Cadmus, for the *début* of Mademoiselle Maupin, who had a siren's voice and knew not a note of music. I admired, however, as the public did; a proud and masculine face, an imposing figure, are qualities as useful at the theatre as elsewhere. I remarked especially the beauty of her teeth, hair, and bosom. She represented Pallas; and when, spear in hand, she descended from heaven in a machine, the applause burst out on every side. She rose up nobly, lifted her helm, and saluted the audience, which did not fail to respond to her.

I was so little accustomed to ropes and traps and pulleys, by which I was surrounded, that I retreated hastily when Mademoiselle Maupin issued from her glory in the midst of the artifices. I felt myself falling, and, to keep my footing, caught hold of the petticoat of a little, lively dancer whose charms had struck me; she thought herself lost, as I did also, but we dropped, roughly enough, into the vaults beneath the stage; a fall of twenty feet could not have been softer.

"My lord!" cried my victim.

"My lady!" I added in the same tone.

Meanwhile, all was bustle on the stage; and whilst the lackeys were seeking torches and ladders, I had time to prove to my sub-

terranean nymph how little I was wounded. They reached us, and great was their astonishment to find us on such a good understanding. The place being dark, they did not notice the blushes of Mademoiselle Florence; that was the name of my dancing-girl. Our acquaintance, in spite of its ill-omened commencement, was not of a kind that I could wish to see ended. I only thought of the Duc de Chartres under the title of a successor; I do not remember whether I even admitted him as a participator. Florence pleased him as much as myself, and she had reason to congratulate herself on the greatness of soul of a Prince of the Blood. She gave him, in return for a large pension, a son whose body was formed rightly enough, to say nothing of his wits; he became M. l'Abbé de Saint-Albin, who has taken it into his head to be jealous of me. As for Florence, who died subsequently a very sorry death; she was too silly to detach the Duc de Chartres' heart from La Sery, and he soon grew tired of a body without a soul. She could not talk, and her only answer to any remark was a laugh. Her son resembled his mother with regard to mind but slightly; it was as though he had been made in despite of her.

The Duc de Chartres, meanwhile, spurred on by this trial, passed from Florence to the Maupin, and did not tire of opera girls. The Maupin had what her predecessor lacked; physically, as morally, she was a dragoon; she handled the sword like a fencing-master; her tongue was no less audacious. Her sorriest defect, in my opinion, was her passion for her own sex; this even led her into scandalous excesses. The Duc de Chartres did his utmost to convert her and did but half succeed. I had contrived this affair, which brought me nothing but vexations, with the alternative of having my throat cut by a woman.

Dumenil, an actor of the opera, having seen the failure of his amorous projects with La Maupin, as a scheme of vengeance planned to cause a quarrel between her and the Duc de Chartres. He had made my acquaintance, since my habit of going behind the scenes; he sought me out, and the resentment I felt against the Maupin incited me to second him. He related to me, amongst other exploits of this young lady, an incident which might have landed her in a prison, perhaps, even further. When she was a member of the Opera Company of Marseilles she became tenderly attached to a young person who was relegated by her family to a convent at Avignon; she was wrath at this separation,

and contrived to be accepted as a novice in the same convent. There she consecrated herself to the service of her mistress rather than of God. But, tired of the restraint to which both had to submit, the two friends formed a plan of escape which was more fortunate than prudent. A nun died, and was buried. Maupin, during the night, exhumes the body, carries it into the cell of her accomplice, and escapes with her, thanks to the outbreak of a fire. They took refuge in Germany, and let themselves be tried and found guilty in default. Maupin was condemned to be burned; but ten years having passed, she owed her impunity to the forgetfulness of justice and the protection of her lovers.

I retailed this adventure in the Palais-Royal, and seasoned it with a thousand witticisms which were not to the honour of the Maupin. The Duc de Chartres, whom I had indoctrinated, displayed an indifference to her for which she held me responsible. She addressed me a note, in which she promised to kill me outright; I knew she was capable of keeping her word, and replied to her that abbés, like women, did not fight. This answer given, I kept on the alert, and her anger was spent in insults which I scorned; for prudence's sake, however, I refrained from going abroad for a fortnight.

Indeed, she was a privileged duellist, considering that the edicts did not speak of women. She had taken lessons from Séranne, her first lover; the most skilful master of fence did not frighten her; she made children, she said, in reparation for her deadly strokes. Her courage was of a quality to chill my own, and, moreover, I should have deemed it shame to be slain by a woman. She took such delight in passing for a man, that she always dressed as one, and the women noticed so handsome a cavalier. That was somewhat her aim.

I know not how she learned or divined that Dumenil was the prime cause of the rumours that circulated about her; she hid her resentment from him, but one night after the play, when Dumenil was crossing the Place des Victoires, he was accosted by a man, who offered him a cane and a sword.

"Rascal," said the unknown, "I give you your choice."

"Thieves!" cried Dumenil.

"If you call out, you are a dead man," answered the voice, which he recognised,—"pray, choose."

"Maupin, dear, you are jesting; let us walk on together."

"I see, insolent varlet, that I must make use of the arm that is the due of cowards; turn round with a good grace, and the first cry you give will be your last—I swear it."

The bastinade was frankly applied, and Dumenil missed no portion of it.

"Now," said Maupin, with a laugh, "your watch and snuff-box."

"My dear comrade," said Dumenil, "you do not snuff, and it is too dark to see the time."

"Dumenil, obey and be off with you."

"I assure you, wretch, you ply a dangerous trade."

Mademoiselle Maupin departed with the snuff-box and the watch. On the morrow, Dumenil gave a detailed account to his comrades of the peril he had incurred the night before. "There were four foot-pads," he said, "and I am lucky to have escaped at the cost of a snuff-box set with diamonds and a Loiret watch."

"You are an impudent liar," interrupted Mademoiselle Maupin, "the proof is that here is your watch and snuff-box; I return them to you. I presume you will not return the stripes I have given you; a woman is enough against a coward and poltroon like yourself."

This adventure led me to expect an attack against myself, and I sacrificed Dumenil, in order to frame a treaty of peace which delivered me from every apprehension. But, notwithstanding this patched-up reconciliation, I was delighted at a scandal which disgusted the Duc de Chartres with this firebrand.

Monsieur gave a great ball at the Palais-Royal, on the occasion of his daughter's marriage; the Court was present, yet, none the less, amongst the crowd of guests, many who were not invited had stolen in. Mademoiselle Maupin, perhaps by arrangement with the Duc de Chartres, arrived in man's dress; we were the only persons to recognise her, and the Prince was delighted to see her ogling all the women with an ease and boldness which did credit to her habit.

"Dubois," said the Prince, "the Chevalier de Lorraine has been taken in by the label."

He had rivals even, and Monsieur asked everybody who was the pretty boy, and no one could tell him. His whim sent him in pursuit of the Maupin, who was equally busy round Madame d' Argenton. The latter, too politic to pay any open attention to any one save the Duc de Chartres, drove Mademoiselle Maupin

to despair by her silence. The impudent creature did not confine herself to words, and a cry from Mademoiselle de Sery, simultaneous with a gesture of the Maupin, angered a certain Laboëssière, a cousin of the insulted lady, whose cause he espoused.

"Fellow," said the young man, who was supported by two officers of the guard of Monsieur, "come out of here and account to me for your impertinence."

"With all the pleasure in the world," said the Maupin, whose irritation was greater, owing to the coldness of Mademoiselle de Sery; "come, all the three of you, and more if you like."

They descended to the courtyard, and swords were drawn. The three adversaries of La Maupin were left on the pavement. Monsieur, being informed that the pretty dancer he had noticed so particularly was a woman in disguise, prevented her arrest; on the contrary, she returned to the ball in the midst of the general admiration, and Mademoiselle de Sery withdrew in despair; but the Duc de Chartres, to please his titular mistress, never saw the Amazon again. He gave her up body and soul to Monsieur, who had too late perceived that she was a woman.

When one has once tasted the princesses of the stage, one cannot dispense with them; I had to turn my thoughts to replacing the Maupin, and at the risk of falling from Scylla to Charybdis, I passed from the Opera to the Theatre-Français. Descoteaux, the flute-player, again offered to aid me with his lights.

"At this moment," he said, "a new star is rising on the stage."

"Where does she lie?" I asked.

"At Baron's," he said.

Descoteaux described to me, with his wonted frankness, the sensual qualities of the Desmares, who was then only sixteen, and had had more than sixteen lovers. Baron was the champion rival of everyone, with everybody for his rival. It was to the house of this ex-comedian, vainest of all vain fellows, that I went to sample the charms of the Desmares.

This Baron, whom I had seen sometimes at the Prince de Conti's, who put up with his impertinences, on the score of revenge, had left the stage at the age when a man begins to become a good actor. No one ever knew the true motive of this precipitate retirement; I have heard it said that some great lord, whom Baron had made cuckold, had given him a birching

in form of reprisal. Baron sought to have satisfaction, which was refused him, and, to avenge himself for this irreparable insult, thought to punish the public by abandoning the stage, where, thanks to his face and the women, he had had such a prodigious success. He hoped that the King would intervene to reinstate him as a comedian; unfortunately he underrated his power as against the power of Louis XIV, had his trouble for nothing, and repented it for thirty years, until his vanity overweighed all other considerations, and he once more flung himself at the head of the public, who takes him in spite of his eighty years.

The personage whom I saw was no whit less ridiculous than the portraits that were made of him. Fatigue and illness had robbed him of his hair, for which he substituted a blonde wig, crimped in Roman fashion. His eyebrows and moustachio were dyed to match his effeminate face, which was rouged and powdered. His toilette surpassed that of the most affected dandies, his locks tied gallantly, his bonnet set with a cluster of russet-coloured plumes, infinitely tight hose, an elegant doublet, opened to display a fine lace shirt; he strutted as he walked with his head thrown backwards, and his patronising smile was directed to all indiscriminately; his voice, inflated with the accent of the stage, played ever the Cid or Britannicus, and his gestures harmonised with it; he was more a comedian than ever.

The Desmares, mighty prodigal with her caresses and outbursts of gaiety, was always flinging herself into Baron's arms. He would say to her mincingly:

"Little one, respect my coiffure, it will be honoured to-night by the perfumed kisses of a Duchess."

"You told me this morning it was a Marquise," put in Descoteaux.

"I thought it was a Princess," said the Desmares. "All the same, my son, those great ladies are very difficult to please, and you do not suffice them."

"My dear," resumed Descoteaux, "they all remember seeing you play the part of Love in Psyche."

"I was only six years old at that time," answered Baron, vexed at this reminder.

"As for me," growled Descoteaux, "I was only twenty at the time, and I am the same age as yourself."

"Desmares," cried Baron, red with anger, "I will leave

Monsieur to persuade you that I am more than a hundred years old; I will give you proofs of my youth in another place."

He left the room, pirouetting, and quoting the couplet:

"Je suis jeune, il est vrai; mais aux âmes bien nées
Le talent n'attend pas le nombre des annees."

During this amusing altercation I had leisure to observe Desmares. She is no more than the shadow of herself to-day, and one reads upon her pale face the inscription: *Fructus belli.* At this period she was fresh, white, well-made, lively, and fascinating. She was not loved, she was adored. The little person had met with success on every side, and her success was partly due to her appearance; the *habitués* of the wings, the Marquesses and Viscounts, consorted with her, and, with the permission of Baron, her master and gallant, she had distributed her favours to the most urgent amongst them. She readily diverted herself with the men, laughed and sang and led a merry life. However, she had her capricious refusals. She might have extracted many a deed of endowment; but, so long as pleasure alone was her motive, her disinterestedness was a perfect prodigy. She desired no one to be ruined for love of her; but she was beginning now to repent of her simplicity.

I drew her into a corner of the room, and she thought at first I was going to speak for myself; her "no" was on her lips.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "do you know how fair a use might be made of so many attractions?"

"You can tell me nothing new on that chapter," she retorted.

"Perhaps; at any rate, I shall be happy to try."

"My dear sir," she quoted,

"You ought, meseems, to better arm your breast,
And reason first ere you try such a plan."

"'Tis for you, fair Princess, to reason a little, and you will accept."

"Not I, unless there is to be a complete metamorphosis."

"Here it is; twenty-two years old, a handsome face, wit, and a Prince of the Blood into the bargain."

"Write it down that I accept with my eyes shut."

"Follow me then, my goddess."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To the Palais-Royal."

This name produced a magical effect on this virtue so accustomed to capitulations, and my fair pointed out the road to me. She already knew how *to put on a face which never blushed.* In truth, her sense of gratitude owed me some compensation; caprice was mixed up with it, and I did well to possess myself in patience for lack of aught better to do. The Duc de Chartres was in bed when we arrived, and I entered his apartment alone to inform him of the agreeable surprise.

"Plague!" said he, "Sery is coming to find me to-night. What is to be done, man of expedients?"

"Say that you are ill, and prove that you are nothing of the kind."

This advice was followed, and Madame Desmares played the part of the Comtesse d' Argenton. Nor was this the last time.

The Duc de Chartres again almost lost his head over this actress, who had already the experience of a woman of forty. She spared no means of acquiring influence over the Prince's senses, animating them with all the voluptuousness of her own. Such was the power of this siren that, four years after having left her, the Duc de Chartres came back to her with all the attraction of novelty. What she desired happened, however much imagination may have served her in the circumstances. She became with child, and the Duc de Chartres accepted the responsibility of more than one. This pregnancy was a wonder to him, and one day, when he was slapping the nicely rounded belly, he repeated a host of paternal endearments.

"Ah, it's going well, Charlotte, it's the weeds that thrive; I think our child wants nothing."

"Nay, Monseigneur," answered the Desmares, "the hair has still to be made, try and forget not one of them."

It was a girl who was born before the time, and I think I may assert that she had plenty of hair.

CHAPTER XIX

DUBOIS AS DIPLOMATIST—M. DE BARBEZIEUX—M. DE TALLARD, FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO ENGLAND—THE *CHEVALIER DUBOIS* IN LONDON—SAINT EVREMONT AND THE DUCHESSE DE MAZARIN—QUOTATION FROM A LETTER OF HER CHAPLAIN—LORD STANHOPE—DUBOIS IN ENGLISH PAY—ROMANS AND STUARTS — DENUNCIATIONS OF M. DE TALLARD — THE *LETTRE-DE-CACHET*—DUBOIS AT MARLY—ENGLISH WOMEN

I HAD often spoken to the Duc de Chartres of the pleasure I should have in finding myself engaged in a political negotiation. The occasion presented itself for my making an attempt of my talents as a diplomatist or intriguer. The marriage of Mademoiselle de Blois had already shown what I could do. M. de Tallard was ambassador of the King of France in England, since the recognition of the Prince of Orange as King by Louis XIV, in the teeth of the exiles of Saint-Germain. However, in spite of this peace of exhaustion, William was secretly plotting to break it; this he succeeded in doing two years later. M. de Tallard wrote to request a sort of spy, a secretarial factotum who would work under his orders for the maintenance of the treaty of Riswick. The Duc de Chartres heard talk of the difficulty of finding the man they wanted; he recalled me to the King's recollection, who had not forgotten the marriage of his bastard, and the genius I had exhibited in the circumstances.

"I consent, Monsieur," he said to his nephew, "to send your Dubois to London, on condition that on his return he does not ask me for a Cardinal's hat. Send him in my behalf to Barbezieux."

The Prince acquainted me with the King's consent, and, in my ambassadorial zeal, I wished to set off without delay. I repaired three or four times uselessly to M. de Barbezieux, who, with his lordly mania for making people wait in his ante-chamber, disdained to receive me. The first time, I heard him in his closet playing with his dog, whom he called, I know not why, *La Fontange*;

the second, he was talking with Fagon, his physician, the same who killed him by dint of blood-letting; on the third, he was busied with no less than four sultanas, drinking, laughing, and making love. Tired out with these vain attempts, I insisted upon entering, making use of the King's name, of that of the Duc de Chartres, and of my own, which was short, but lavishly repeated. I was introduced at the moment when M. de Barbezieux was escaping by a door behind. I did not lose courage, but obtained the company of the Duclos, whom the minister knew professionally. She had the entry of his closet, and there I came under her safeguard into M. de Barbezieux's presence; he was stretched on a divan, half undressed, and he would have been mightily embarrassed to prove that he had been fasting.

Barbezieux, son of the Marquis de Louvois, had his father's handsome features, but without their hardness; when he was in a good humour, his face became gracious and engaging. His person came out triumphantly from any encounter: he was no less skilled in work than in pleasure; in manners as elegant as in speech; he had his father's subtlety, and, in addition, a lively wit, varied, and to the point; the greatest ladies ran after his favours. Thus he would sacrifice the ministry to parties of women, where he was the only moustachio present. With these qualities he had enough pride, anger, and insolence to make himself hated by his best friends. However, as he had insinuated himself into the good graces of the Maintenon, he dominated Louis XIV to such a degree that he could make him change the time of his councils to suit the convenience of his orgies. He was accused of embezzlement, and in truth his daily expenditure was so extravagant that he needed inexhaustible resources for so much money. His mother, though she was so rich, shut her purse to him even more than her heart.

The Duclos procured for me all M. de Barbezieux's good-will, and he made out my commission, delivered a few exhortations to me, begged me to send him the newest possible English beauties, and dismissed me abruptly in favour of the Duclos.

I have since suspected that Mademoiselle de Sery, who dreaded my influence over the Duc de Chartres' mind, had warmly entreated my departure. Nevertheless, after adapting my accoutrement to my new position, almost without farewells, that I might have the fewer regrets, I started under the title

and costume of the Chevalier Dubois, because, in England and Holland, Abbés are not received at the customs. It was sufficient to change the label on my bag.

My journey from Paris to London was as insignificant as the road from Paris to Versailles. I accomplished it in my carriage with the faithful Purel, who was destined to succumb to the fogs of the Thames. I had not even the experience of a gale, and I went, booted and curled, to pitch my camp in M. de Tallard's Hotel. He received me, at first, with a master's protection; he was not slow to discover that he had found one in me. M. de Tallard is one of those men morally and physically little, whose ambition resembles the golden Colossus of Nebuchadnezzar, which had feet of clay. Jealousy has made him visibly lean, and every success obtained by another causes him to lose an ounce of flesh. I do not think he has ever looked anyone in the face in his life. Were he King of France, he would wish to be King of China. Any wit he may possess is spoiled by his miserable envy, which can see none in anybody else. Such he was then, such he remains now. His greatest chagrin was caused by the embassies obtained by d' Harcourt through the channel of Madame de Maintenon. He covered his perfidy beneath the fairest exterior, and wrapped up even his insults in politeness. I have never seen a more adroit intriguer, although he is timid in his conceptions. He had only asked for a subordinate spy; he took umbrage at the position which I assumed on my arrival.

"Monsieur," he said, after examining my credentials, "I beg you to show yourself but little in the town; it is essential to my projects that you remain unknown."

"However, Monsieur," said I, "I have letters of introduction given me by Mademoiselle Ninon de Lenclos to M. de Saint-Evremont."

"Really, you distress me; the first society in London congregates in that house."

"Indeed, Monsieur; in that case I shall combine pleasure with utility."

"I should be delighted to feel you are satisfied; but I must beg you to pay attention to the fact that the Chevalier Dubois is not an ambassador of France."

"You need only vouch me to make sure of it, and it is to you only that I will report the negotiations I may carry out."

"I warn you, M. le Chevalier, that I only answer for my own errors."

I presented myself that same night at the house of M. de Saint-Evremont, who lived in a state of contemplative love with Madame la Duchesse de Mazarin. Around these two fine intelligences, escaped from Versailles, the first lords of Parliament and the best English writers congregated. General conversation was in French, with all the refinements of the Paris *salons*. I was welcomed, caressed, and appreciated, under the auspices of Ninon, who had written amongst other things that I was a compound of sense and spirit. I soon remarked that the English fair sex has the most favourable prejudices in regard to our nation, which is naturally delicate in love affairs. Moreover, Saint-Evremont was quite right in saying that the fine intellects of England are a mean, as it were, between the courtiers of Paris and the burgomasters of Amsterdam.

Saint-Evremont, who had been at the head of literature for more than half-a-century, was at least eighty-five years old at this time. For more than thirty years he had been an exile in England at the request of the Duc de Mazarin, who hoped, by removing him, to disgust the Duchesse with her grey-haired lover; the Duchesse was inconsolable at Saint-Evremont's absence, until she had overcome wind and tide to rejoin him. Saint-Evremont had the most beautiful old age, and his mind was as youthful as at the period when he shone with all his lustre; in his calm and majestic face, his silver locks, in his affable and eloquent speech there was a charm which was irresistible at any age. He told stories with a studied ease; he dazzled the hearer with his play of points and antitheses; he deemed himself happy, and knew how to be so. The liberality of the King of England prevented him from regretting the French Court; his friends and the Duchesse de Mazarin shared the task of enlivening his declining years; his philosophy was not afraid of death. The prodigious vogue obtained by his works had somewhat diminished, but his reputation was not inferior to his wit. He was fond of painting his own portrait, which he repeated in a hundred different fashions, only changing the expressions. He said to us, with that air of satisfaction which never left him: "I live in a condition which is despised by those who have everything, envied by those who have nothing, enjoyed by those who make happiness depend upon

reason; I am neither superstitious, nor impious, nor prodigal; I praise nature and do not complain of fortune; I hate crime; I suffer mistakes; I pity misfortune, and I do not seek what is bad in men in order to decry them." He was a white-haired Plato. How far a cry from our men of letters, envious, malicious, and mean to this philosophical and courtly writer!

The Duchesse de Mazarin retained her beauty though past fifty; I am so little astonished that she should still have admirers, that I would gladly be amongst their number. I could not admire enough her fine black eyes melting beneath her long lashes; her smile had an angelic expression; and her hands were perfect. I had the good fortune to meet with her friendship, but that, to my chagrin, was merely Platonic. She was indulgent to my bad habits, which were not corrected by the English climate; and my conversation particularly pleased her. She made me the confidant of her adventures and sufferings, not the least of which had been her marriage.

She had wedded the choice of her uncle the Cardinal Mazarin, the son of the Marquis de La Meilleraye, one of the richest nobles at Court, to whom she brought a dowry of more than twenty-eight millions. The Duc de Mazarin was mad with jealousy; had he been a hundred times more handsome he would have been hideous in comparison with his wife; his qualities were brutalised by his constant terror of not being alone in his possession of the woman he had married. He had been brought up in the best of discipline, was polished, courageous, and well-informed; the Duchesse de Mazarin turned him into an idiot; the priests made him a ridiculous bigot. On several occasions the Duchesse, who was gallant, like many of her compeers, had fled the conjugal bed, going in search of another in Rome or England, in which latter country she finally settled; the Duc de Mazarin wrote to her: "Come back, my queen, I prostrate myself at your feet, everything shall be forgotten." She came back owing to want of money, but soon departed again, more furious than ever with her husband; it was amongst her grievances that he would not let her sleep alone. This husband, as is so often the case, survived his wife a few years, and carried with him everywhere her embalmed body in an ebony box. I think I have seen him sometimes at the Court, where the King treated him with honourable familiarity. I have in my hands a letter from his

almoner, written to Madame de Mazarin a few days before her death; she has added this note in her own hand: "*If I were sure that the man whose wife I am would go to Paradise to-morrow, I would pray for his death to-day.*" Here are some fragments of this curious letter which has been given me in memory of her:

"My poor lord has come to such a degree of sickness that his reason is almost gone; he travels constantly from Brittany to Alsace, with no motive, but with the utmost haste; he stays for days communing only with his rosary and a little image of the Virgin which he wears on his sleeve. He does not like me to leave him for a moment, making me dine at his table and sleep in his room, because he is afraid of dying without a confession. He often harks back to you, Madame, asking when he will see you again? That is his most ordinary idea. He goes and sits on the Port-Louis, in the midst of the sailors, and questions them as to the time it takes to cross over to England. I think he will end by going in search of you. In the meantime, he is employing a host of painters to paint your portrait, and he dwells in Nantes, for preference, because he can see the sea. His château is everlastingly full of monks and pilgrims. He lately wished to make a crusade in Palestine; this is not his sorriest project. Yesterday he summoned his servants to him, and said to them: 'My friends, in the Bible they cast lots for the spoils; it shall be the same with my household.' A lottery was very seriously arranged, and the least singular result of chance was not that of the sweep who became secretary. I was fortunate in not being made by him to accept the post of cook. People who make a trade of religion lead him on to incredible follies, besides devouring his revenues. The superb statues he has brought from Italy have been mutilated by the barbarians; the hammer starts the work of destruction, and the brush is commissioned to clothe all the nudities."

I noticed in the little Court of Madame de Mazarin the most celebrated personages amongst the Whigs and Tories. One saw there indiscriminately, the Duke of Dorset, who was one of the most handsome of the courtiers of Charles II, and who reaped every advantage from the difference there is between *wicked* verses and bad verse; Milady Littleton, who remembered she had once been pretty; Milady Barry, daughter of a gentleman, who had been a woman of pleasure and an actress, and had

been left with enough wit to make people forget it all; Milady Howe, daughter of Prince Rupert and an actress named Mistress Hughes. Amongst these names—to which I attach a pleasant memory—I will not omit that of Lord Stanhope, who became my friend, and remained so until his untimely death. Massillon and he are the only men whom I have really loved, out of sympathy perhaps.

Lord Stanhope, who was not of the family of Chesterfield, but of an old and noble family in the county of Nottinghamshire, may be looked upon as being, after myself, the most able diplomatist of his time; we were worthy to understand, and mutually admire one another. Lord Stanhope was of as thin and sickly a figure as I was myself, although he was much younger. His journeys to Spain and Germany had formed his judgment and taste; his talents inclined him towards ministerial affairs; he proved since, however, that he would have made an excellent officer. He found a certain analogy, very flattering to myself, between his mind and my own, and, above all, between our two epicurean philosophies. They had more than one occasion to consort together, both at table and elsewhere.

Lord Stanhope conceived a real passion for the Chevalier Dubois, who mocked at the Abbé as of old; he conducted me into the great society of London; he presented me everywhere, with praises which gained me as many friends as he possessed himself.

The French envoy, I must confess, was treated by the English almost as a compatriot. Of my diplomatic operations I speak in another work; I displayed remarkable skill in them. The English Government perceived that I was more of an ambassador than M. de Tallard himself, and I had the weakness or the wit, to take money for harmonising the interests of Louis XIV and William III. It was merely a matter of shutting my eyes to the designs of England, and I received with two hands. I will not justify this conduct, which has the precedent of greater men than the Chevalier Dubois; but I avenged myself thus, for the unjust oblivion in which the King had left me to vegetate, for all recompense for the marriage of his bastard with a Prince of the Blood. Finally, I protest, that since the death of Louis XIV, I have not touched a gold piece of His Britannic Majesty's.

Lord Stanhope loved pleasure with that moderation which

forms its delight; he assembled at mysterious suppers the most charming damsels in London, and a few friends, in the number of whom he had admitted me. These were the most delicious moments I have passed. Amongst the guests there was the grandson of the first Duke of Ormond, who consecrated his life to the Stuart cause. This second Duke of Ormond, faithless to that unprofitable devotion, had attached himself to the Prince of Orange and Queen Anne; he felt remorse in his heart of hearts, and later this got him accused of high treason, and brought him back to the side of the Pretender. He was already a matured man, a profound politician, and a negotiator as well as a general, capable of everything, fit for everything. At Stanhope's suppers, he directed the conversation, which was more serious and instructive than one would have expected under the circumstances. The Duke of Ormond brought up the Stuarts on every opportunity.

"Milord," I said to him one day, with the ease of a man who lies, "I have often heard King James speak of your worth, in the Council as in the field."

"M. le Chevalier," he replied, with emotion, "you will tell His Majesty from me, that I would lay down my life to see him assume once more the rank of his ancestors."

This declaration might have been his ruin. Happily we had no desire to betray ourselves; it would have been a general betrayal.

The ancient Romans were more interesting to Lord Stanhope than all the Stuarts of Saint-Germain. He knew them so intimately that one might have taken him to be their contemporary. He pretended to find the whole of modern civilisation in them.

"I defy the poorest mind," he said, "not to acquire statesmanship by reading Tacitus."

It was his breviary. He esteemed me highly, although I did not derive my words and actions from the same source; however, he reproached me with the superficial attitudes of my mind.

"Master William," he said to me, "you have more wit than Sancho, and he had overmuch; like him, you expend it in sallies, trifling points and verbal quips; it becomes you well, but strength of mind and depth of judgment seem to you superfluities."

I finally succeeded in causing him to change his opinion; so

much so, that he compared me in English verse to a precipice which at a distance looks like a grassy plain. Whence it comes that I have always been taken for a criminal, a buffoon, or a knave.

I had made the Chevalier Dubois the fashion; there was no great *fête* at which he did not assist; I dined with ministers; I supped with actresses, and the more I was sought after, the more was the Ambassador deserted. He was in high dudgeon at this, and thought fit to pull me up in the midst of my encroachments on his office. He wrote to the King, and to M. de Torcy, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and to M. de Barbezieux, and made a mighty noise about the secret relations I was maintaining with England.

"Sire," he wrote to the King, "Your Majesty has no need of two Ambassadors in England; say the word, and I will retire."

"Monsieur," he wrote to M. de Torcy, "the Chevalier Dubois is holding nocturnal gatherings with English lords; he is hatching plots against the King of France."

"My dear Barbezieux," he wrote to the latter, "this knave Dubois is degrading my authority; he gives himself out as Ambassador in haunts of vice; besides, he calls himself my coadjutor."

Subsequently these fine epistles fell into my hands. Torcy made such an outcry that he was allowed to send me a *lettre-de-cachet*, with a command to return instantly to France.

I signalised my departure from London by a petty vengeance which exasperated Tallard's vanity. I invited Court and Town to a rout in the Ambassador's very hotel. The preparations had been made with diligence and secrecy. I went and installed myself, under the pretext of having business to conclude, in Tallard's room. He rose in his dressing-gown.

"You are in full dress," he said to me, with an air of satisfaction; "do you leave to-day?"

"At mid-day," I answered deliberately.

Suddenly a sound of carriages was heard in the streets; the gates of the hotel were thrown open.

"What is it?" asked the Ambassador. "Visitors so early; I am not even dressed."

"It is unnecessary, Monsieur," I answered, whilst he was watching the arrivals from the window.

"The Chevalier Dubois," repeated the lackeys, and the guests were introduced into my apartments.

"What! M. le Chevalier," said Tallard, "you receive people—"

"Only the first families in England," I answered, "King William would come himself if he was not at Amsterdam, occupied in receiving the Czar of Russia."

The carriages arrived in a line, and my name came every moment to deafen the ears of the Ambassador.

"Look," I said, "there is Saint-Evremont, Lord Stanhope, the Duke of Ormond, the Duke of Essex, Lady Temple! Adieu, M. Tallard, you have no commands for me at Versailles?"

"Yes; that you will remain there *in saecula saeculorum*."

"Amen," said I.

I descended to do the honours of my assembly, and at the same time to pay my adieux, and I departed universally regretted except by the Ambassador. Since this time I have conducted a regular correspondence with several nobles at that Court, where the Chevalier Dubois is not yet forgotten.

I felt a certain alarm on returning to France; this was far from being dispelled when my *lettre-de-cachet* sent me straight to the Bastille, as a prisoner of importance. I was by no means flattering myself that I should issue from it with the whiteness of innocency, when, upon an order of M. de Barbezieux, I was set at liberty; I went to thank him, and he said to me:

"You have not to thank me, Abbé, but Ninon, who, hearing of your misfortune, came to answer for you. She told me of the death of her friend the Duchesse de Mazarin."

"She is dead!" I cried.

"Of old age, it appears," he answered lightly. "However, go and reward Ninon for the service she has rendered you, for, but for her you could have lived and died, and come to life again in the Bastille, and no one the wiser."

"And M. le Duc de Chartres?"

"Bah! He is busy making bastards, and laughs at Abbés."

"Monsieur, I have ordered two or three pale faces for you from London, such as we are wont to call fair English women."

I drew in great breaths of the air of liberty; the first use I made of it was to present myself at Marly where the King and Court were. I assumed an air of assurance, and took a walk through the gardens, where I knew I should meet Louis XIV;

I saw him in the distance giving orders to his gardeners. The Duchesse de Bourgogne was hanging on his arm; an ugly face, which was maintained at a respectful distance, revealed to me Le Nostre, the most famous designer of gardens of that time in France. The King saw me at the same instant; whether from distraction, or that the accusations of Tallard had passed out of his mind, he saluted me with a kindness which encouraged me to accost him.

"M. l' Abbé," he said, with a benevolent air, "this comes of having overmuch wit; you can not go abroad without making a business."

"And exciting envy, Sire," I answered quickly.

"M. de Tallard," he resumed, "makes you out a criminal of State."

"In revenge, Sire; I know not what one could make of him."

"I know him; and what he says does not seem to me an article of faith; but one should not display one's disagreements to foreign eyes; I recalled you for fear of scandal."

"Monsieur," said the Duchesse de Bourgogne, "is it true that all Englishwomen have blue eyes and fair hair?"

"Madame," I answered adroitly, "that would be as though one who had seen you were to attribute the praises you deserve to every princess in the world."

"Sire," said the little Duchess with a laugh, "this is the soft speech of diplomacy."

"Monsieur," said Le Nostre, "is it true that King William has not found my gardens to his liking?"

"He has called in artists from Holland who have upset all your avenues."

Poor Le Nostre uttered a sigh, such as a king might, when he had been told of the loss of a battle.

My welcome at the Palais-Royal was weighing upon me. My first glance convinced me that from the smallest to the greatest I had been forgotten. My place, however, had not been taken. I found the Duc de Chartres a father of bastards and of legitimate children. Mademoiselle de Sery had played the coquette so well, that the Prince was unable to be rid of her; he had ceased to love her, and was astonished that she loved him still. His constancy alone had not improved. He seemed almost indifferent at my return.

"Is it you, Abbé?" he said; "I had been led to believe you were a man ripe for hanging."

"I hope, Monseigneur, that will not be in your lifetime."

"Why not? Better men than you have been hanged! Do you know that I have been very nearly bored during your absence?"

"I told you that I was indispensable to you."

"Oh, I do not say that. However, what is the news from London?"

"The women there are charming, and you shall judge of them from a sample."

"Good, my son; now I recognise my Abbé Dubois."

I was so vexed at this cool reception that I said to Massillon, when I confided my grievance to him:

"The charm is broken; friendship is but a habit. So long as I was on the Prince's back I drove him as I liked; I ought never to have let go, and I have done well to return to him."

The importation arrived as I had foreseen; a cargo of fair Englishwomen, forwarded to me by my friend Stanhope, was the means of renewing my intimacy with the Duc de Chartres, who once more called me his saviour.

"Abbé," said he, "the two Williams who conquered England are not worth Guillaume Dubois."

CHAPTER XX

THE DEATH OF MONSIEUR — INDIFFERENCE OF THE COURT — DUBOIS TAKES THE TIDINGS TO THE ROYAL FAMILY

On the 8th of June 1701, Monsieur's household being at Saint-Cloud, he went to see the King at Marly. The Duc de Chartres had begged him to obtain a command for him in the army of Spain. Louis XIV, who was engaged at his devotions, received him ill enough.

"My brother," said he, "to-day is an Ember-day fast, I hope you have not broken it."

"Through a pardonable forgetfulness, Sire, I ate a biscuit."

"It seems to me, my brother, that you are on the way to follow the example of your son, who, according to Madame de Chartres, is the first heretic in my kingdom."

"You must have been wrongly informed, Sire; the Duc de Chartres has been reared in religious principles which render him worthy of your protection; I came to beg you to grant him an employment in your armies."

"No, my brother, I do not wish to expose the lives of persons of my family; we have enough generals."

"But, Sire, lack of occupation is an incentive to vice. . . . "

"Enough; the Duc de Chartres shall not go to the wars in my lifetime. Thus I shall deprive him of the means, if not of the desire to hurt me."

The harshness of this refusal disheartened Monsieur, and he went back to Saint-Cloud with a violent headache; the Père Feuillet, whom he met, having spoken to him of the fast.

"Father," said he, "do I break the fast if I eat a biscuit?"

"Eat a calf, but be a good Christian," retorted Feuillet; and he turned his back on him in anger.

This fresh affront set a climax to Monsieur's indisposition. He went to meet Hébert, the mad woman, took her hands in his, and burst into tears.

"What is the matter with your Royal Highness?" she said, weeping also.

"Alas, my poor Hébert, it is all over with me; I am going to die."

"Die. Why die? In any case I am ready."

I passed through the garden where this interview took place, and the Demoiselle Hébert, who had recovered all her reason, called me, and begged me to fetch a doctor. Monsieur, feeling worse, sat down on the turf.

"A doctor that Monsieur requires!" I cried. "Fagon happens to be at the Château now."

"Fagon!" interrupted Hébert. "Why not the Chevalier de Lorraine or the Marquis d'Effiat?"

"Hébert," said the Prince, in a feeble voice, "it is useless to create an alarm; it would frighten Madame too much. You and Dubois will help to support me to the house."

The Duc de Chartres, who had been a little way off, ran up at the noise, and seeing his father's inflamed face, uttered cries which threw all the servants in Saint-Cloud into confusion.

Monsieur was carried to his bed; the mad woman, the Duc de Chartres, and myself refused to leave him. At ten o'clock the apoplexy was past remedy, and Gendron, after examining the patient with tears in his eyes, silently seized the Duc de Chartres' arm and led him to the clock, and made a circle of the dial with his finger; the Prince understood this warning, and his grief burst out violently. The mad Hébert neither prayed nor wept, but stationed by the pillow, motionless as a statue, and draped in black, as though with a presentiment, she fixed her blank eyes on the contorted features of the dying man. Madame, whom they had hesitated to inform of what was passing, arrived when the death agony had begun; she leant over Monsieur, who showed by a motion of his head that he recognised her; after which, with a coolness which surprised me in a woman, Princess of the Blood and Palatine though she may be, she dismissed everybody except the mad woman, the Duc de Chartres, Gendron, and me; she handed me Monsieur's breviary, opened at the prayers for the dying; I read without knowing what I was reading. The Duc de Chartres had thrown himself into a chair, his face was buried in his hands; Gendron followed the least movements of the dying man's pulse; the mad woman continued to gaze upon the scene with stupid eyes, whilst Madame, having called for writing materials, dispatched a large number of letters, in which she did not, doubtless,

forget the sickness and perhaps the death of Monsieur. Until five o'clock in the morning there was no sound in the room but the hissing respiration of the dying man, the sobs of the Duc de Chartres, and the scratching of Madame's pen upon the paper.

About five o'clock, Monsieur fell into so profound a stupor, that Gendron cried involuntarily: "It is over!" This exclamation recalled poor Hébert from her reverie; she made a quick step to the window, opened it, made the sign of the cross, and threw herself out. She was picked up dead. Monsieur awoke with a start at the sound of this accident.

"My daughter!" he cried, and lost consciousness. Madame, who thought him dead, returned to finish her correspondence; we remained by Monsieur's side. He died at noon. The Duc de Chartres threw himself like a madman upon his father's body; it was necessary to employ force to remove him. As soon as Monsieur's death was known, the Chevalier de Lorraine started for one of his Abbeys, and the Duchesse de Chartres went directly to Marly, where the affliction was not great.

I repaired, in the Duc de Chartres' name, to announce to the King and Royal family that Monsieur had passed away. I met everywhere on my way with joyous faces, suppressed smiles which did not surprise me. Monsieur detested the Maintenon, and often did not conceal this aversion; in revenge, the Maintenon had damaged him in the King's opinion. I presented myself before His Majesty, who had already decided upon his attitude with regard to the death.

"I congratulate you, M. l'Abbé," he said, "on belonging to M. le Duc d'Orléans."

"Sire, I have sad tidings to communicate to you."

"I know; and I hope with all my heart that my poor brother is in Paradise."

"Sire, do not doubt it," said old Bontemps; "God thinks twice before he damns princes."

I seem to remember that the Maréchale de La Meilleraye has said something as naïvely flattering.

The King ordered me to bear the same tidings to Madame de Maintenon, who received me like the actress she was, with words of desolation; then, in the midst of her display of regret, she asked me what figure Madame was cutting.

"She is writing," I answered, thinking no harm.

"An amiable woman, passionately attached to her husband! She is shedding tears of ink! You will tell her from me, M. l'Abbé, that this death has prostrated me."

"Madame, I shall never dare . . ."

I did not finish, for I was about to say to the Maintenon that I interpreted her despair by the phrase of Madame de La Suze: "Let her beware of going to Paradise if she must find her husband there."

I next presented myself to the Grand Dauphin, who said to me phlegmatically:

"How pleased the Duc de Chartres must be!"

The Duc de Bourgogne displayed much sorrow, and made Monsieur's funeral oration in these words:

"Ulysses does not leave a Telemachus."

In passing by the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, I heard the King and the Duchesse de Bourgogne, in duet, singing an air out of an opera, of which these lines struck me:

> "La mort souvent s'adresse aux plus aimables;
> Mais, dans son aveugle courroux,
> Elle a des traits vengeurs pour les mortels coupables,
> Elle répare ainsi ses plus rigoureux coups."

I was scandalised at this conduct, and returned to Saint-Cloud to console the Duc de Chartres, and inform him of the interest taken in his misfortune.

"Dubois," he said to me, "when the Maintenon dies, I will call for flutes instead of tapers, and open the ball over her grave!"

They were words wrung from him by despair. I restored courage to him by appealing to his reason.

"You have lost the best of fathers," said I (though I did not think it), "but you are now Duc d'Orléans; you must overcome your grief, in order to prevent your enemies from robbing you of your honours."

"Let the Duchesse de Chartres act," said he; "she will profit by all the advantages of my grievous loss."

He did not deceive himself; the new Duchesse d'Orléans spared no pains to preserve for her household all the prerogatives of that of Monsieur.

I learned since that on that very day, and on the morrow of the death of the King's brother, His Majesty had set an example

of gaiety, and although they did not sing a *Te Deum*, no one at Marly was so poor a courtier as not to play and laugh and amuse himself just as ordinarily. The obsequies, however, were conducted with decency, and mourning was not forgotten. The Demoiselle Hébert was interred, I know not where, and although Monsieur had called her his daughter in a moment of delirium, we are ignorant and shall always be ignorant of her name and origin.

Louis XIV and the Maintenon would have been delighted to reduce Monsieur's inheritance to nothing; but the Duc de Chartres, having become Duc d'Orléans, according to the agreements I had obtained at the time of his marriage, had not only the immense property but also the rights, privileges, and prerogatives of his father. His household was maintained on the same scale, and without any alterations in the ranks and salaries. He did not give up his council, and was distinguished from the other Princes of the Blood by having a chancellor and keeper of the seals, a captain of guards, Swiss, gentlemen, and pages. The number of these last was augmented; and Mademoiselle de Sery, who as Comtesse d'Argenton, was more firmly established than ever, gave two pages, whom she reserved specially for her service, with her own hand to the Duc d'Orléans. Ravannes, one of the small nobility, with a pretty face, but mischievous, malicious, and libertine; Robillard, of *bourgeois* origin, mighty small and ugly, but clever and endowed with excellent qualities. He died very young, as the result of an orgy into which the diabolic Ravannes had dragged him.

The Duc d'Orléans, acting on my counsels and his own inclinations, formed a little Epicurean court which was well worth the Socratic one of Monsieur; it contained a collection of amiable minds and well-bred debauchees. Each one contributed his share of wit and good humour; the Duc d'Orléans was the god of it, and I its high-priest. The nobility, I must admit, were more in evidence than the vulgar, and almost all our initiates were gentlemen with six quarterings. I remember with delight those gallant reunions which were prolonged sometimes far into the night. The King was so much disquieted by our assemblies that he sent spies amongst us, who reassured him. He imagined that we were taking the trouble to conspire against his government; but when he realised that it was pleasure only which united

us, he did not deem it necessary to resume his dragonades against us. The Duc d'Orléans might have employed his leisure in a manner more detrimental to Louis XIV.

His Court was composed of the Marquis d'Effiat, who, by prodigies of wit, retained the position he held under Monsieur; of the Comte de Simiane, who had formed himself in the school of his wife; of the Comte de Clermont; of the Chevalier de Conflans, ever with a story on his lips; of the Abbé de Grancey, brother of the Maréchal de Médavy, and more learned in the mysteries of Venus than in those of the Church; of the Vicomte de Polignac, and the Marquis de Nesle, who were only surpassed in gallantry by their wives; finally, the Marquis de La Fare, Captain of the Guards, the most delicate of voluptuaries, formed a contrast with the Comte de Grammont, who, at the age of eighty, hid his vices as little as his wit. He had enough of the last to redeem more perverse habits than he possessed.

This Grammont, who knew how to reconcile health with pleasure and old age, had immortalised himself in France as well as in England, by a thousand impudent and roguish traits. He would have been killed a hundred times over but for his cowardice, which led him to marry Miss Hamilton. He had been on delicate terms of intimacy with her, when he escaped from London without bidding her farewell. The two brothers Hamilton, wrath at this proceeding, and desirous to marry their sister at any cost, hastened after Grammont, whom they overtook at Calais.

"Monsieur le Comte," they cried, as soon as they saw him, "have you forgotten nothing in London?"

"To be sure," he replied, "I had forgotten to marry your dear sister."

He returned incontinently, and repaired his omission. Hamilton had the stomach to be proud of this brother-in-law, who robbed at cards like a highwayman, but whose repartees and epigrams were quoted everywhere. Grammont has slain twenty reputations with a remark. He used to say: "I am not a man of temper; how comes it, pray, that the people I bite lose theirs with me?" He had never thought of believing in God, and when they talked of religion to him, he would answer: "I have never seen it in the cards." I admired him for a clever knave, and the King loved him with all his faults. It is true that since his exile, Grammont had respected the King and his mistresses. He died

as he had lived, and telling the beads of his rosary, he cried: "I have won the game from God!" The Duc d' Orléans, who was amused by him, undoubtedly despised him.

My position at the Palais-Royal was improved, and Madame, as well as the Duchesse d'Orléans, grew envious of me and were on fire to do me hurt; but it was all in vain; I bore no particular title, but I drew a yearly pension of twelve thousand livres, which I amply earned. The Prince had seen too many proofs of my talents as a *purveyor* not to utilise them. Great ladies, actresses, kept women, were no longer capable of exciting his desires; or rather he had days of *ennui*, when he had to be enlivened by adventures, and my complacence was without limits. I led him back again now to *grisettes*, for whom he acquired such a liking that he was ever ready to return to them.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CLIMAX OF THE DUC D'ORLÉANS' AMOURS WITH THE DESMARES—BARON AS APOTHECARY—THE SYRINGE AND THE NIGHT-CAP — DUBOIS EXPELLED FROM COURT—M. LEDRU THE IRONMONGER — HIS WIFE — HOSPITALITY, JEALOUSY AND AVARICE—THE SIGN OF THE CROIX-DE-FER —THE IMPRISONED HUSBAND—VIRTUE IN AN APRON— THE HAPPY CUCKOLD—M. D'ARGENSON

DURING an absence of mine in the country, the Desmares had effected a reconciliation with the Prince, and the actress had made such skilful use of her knowledge of the world, that the Duc d'Orléans had become her treasurer and dupe. She was more than ever bewitched by Baron, who was not alone, however, in dividing her with the Prince. The former was aware of this partition; the latter refused to know of it. The Desmares had boasted at the Comédie that she was ruining a Prince of the Blood both in health and money; she had only succeeded in part, when I determined to strike a decisive blow and put an end to their intercourse.

One night at supper, the Duc d'Orléans said to me gloomily:

"Dubois, I am tired of a repose that has lasted five days; I counted on a night that should be better employed, and the Desmares has sent word to me that she is unwell."

I had been secretly informed of the causes of this indisposition.

"Monseigneur," I replied, "I will burn a taper when you are rescued from this blood-sucker, whose only aim is to see you under ground. I vow that you ought to blush to have Master Baron for your rival or rather for your colleague."

"What think you, La Fare?" said the Prince to his Captain of Guards.

"Faith, Monseigneur," replied La Fare, "Dubois is right, and so are you. Epicurus, the master of us all, advises us to take our pleasure where we find it."

"'Sdeath!" cried the Prince, "the Desmares is so good to

look at, that it little recks me if Baron and a hundred more have looked on her before me."

"A good principle," said La Fare; "an old proverb is of the same opinion:

"Une femme qu'on tient
Alors vous appartient."

"None the less," I interrupted in anger, "it is shameful to see an old actor preferred to a young Prince of the Blood."

"An actor who lives at your expense in every sense, Monseigneur," added La Fare.

"And who, at this very moment," I went on, "deprives the Duc d'Orléans of a night of which he has need."

"At this moment?" said the Prince. "It is impossible; she would not have the insolence."

"I do not know what she has or has not," I replied, with animation; "but I know what I say."

A domiciliary visit to the Desmares was decided upon, under the form of a pleasure excursion; she no longer dwelt openly with Baron, but the latter spent his days and nights in the little hotel which the Duc d'Orléans had given his mistress in the *impasse* of the Opera. Supper excited our gaiety, and the Prince was not fool enough to take this sort of affair tragically. We arrived at the actress's house, and, in spite of her strict orders to be denied, we made so sudden an entry into her chamber, that we could see a man half-clad escape into the adjacent closet. The lady remained in her bed, groaning like a woman in labour. A triple outburst of laughter told her that we had perceived the fugitive.

"Well, my dear," said the Prince, with the utmost seriousness, "what is this indisposition which keeps you in bed?"

"Terrible colics," said the Desmares, in a suffering voice.

"Poor girl!" continued the Duc d'Orléans. "Why have you not sent for my physician?"

"Mademoiselle has done better," I said; "she has saved time by calling in the apothecary."

"It is true," she interrupted, imagining that I was offering her the means of avoiding a hazardous explanation; "at the noise you made at the door, the poor apothecary took flight."

"Where?" asked La Fare. "Into that closet behind that closed door?"

"Open, my friend," said the Prince through the keyhole; "no one will hurt you; continue your good offices."

At last Baron issued from his hiding-place, trembling in every limb; but as the room was only lit by one lamp, he flattered himself that he would escape without recognition.

"Come now, my dear man," said the Prince, taking his arm; "we have disturbed you at your functions, but do not put yourself out in the least."

"We will shut our eyes," said La Fare, turning his back to laugh.

"Lord!" said I, "if we are in the way here, we will wait in the next room."

"No, my friends," cried the Prince; "Desmares is not so nice as all that, and you must remain to judge of the operation; especially you, Dubois, who have apothecary's blood in your veins."

"Gentlemen," said poor Baron, "excuse me, I am incredibly clumsy before company."

"What!" cried the Prince, "do you not know that I am the Duc d'Orléans?"

"I know nothing, Monseigneur."

"Obey me, notwithstanding, and quickly; an injection for Madame, who is suffering cruelly."

During this dialogue, I had been in search of a syringe, which I charged myself, and put into Baron's hands. He hesitated, heaved a sigh, remembering, no doubt, that he had never before wielded such a sceptre; he was on the point of revealing himself, but the Prince insisted:

"I desire the operation to be performed," he said.

It was performed.

"I am dishonoured!" cried Baron, in the excess of his despair. "I am Baron, the King of the Stage."

"You may be whom you will," said the Prince, "now that the farce is played."

The Desmares tried to carry it on.

"Baron!" she cried, "I am betrayed! What, Monsieur!" she went on with an air of tragedy, "What a horrible scandal! It will be the death of me! Tell me, what did you come here for, M. Baron?"

"For my night-cap, you baggage; you have had it these six years."

This response of Baron's was uttered with a superb pose; you might have thought you were listening to Achilles in the *Iphigénie*.

This scene, some of the most amusing features of which I have forgotten, finished with a solemn rupture between the Prince and the Desmares; in revenge, the latter lost Baron. She found the wherewithal to make up for this loss, replacing quality by quantity. The Duc d'Orléans, delighted in his secret heart to be rid of this Messalina, became all the more attached to me, in view of my genuine attachment to himself. His bounty was frequently manifested to me; a mistress could not have been better treated.

This period was by far the most laborious of my life; from morning to evening, in a thousand disguises, I was running about Paris, sampling shops and alleys, and climbing up into attics; I was seeking the wherewithal to divert the Duc d'Orléans. This adventurous kind of existence gave me faith in the wandering Jew, and the King, who, after Louvois' plan, believed the art of government to consist in espionage, having got wind of my mysterious expeditions, sought knowledge of their motive, as though one conspired with women. I was followed and watched; the result of this police measure was my exclusion from Court. Père La Chaise advised me not to appear before the King; Madame de Maintenon had heard that I had ridiculed her in a couplet, composed *inter pocula*, which had been repeated both in Paris and at Versailles. It was another motive, added to a score of others, for her hatred of me. She put no restraint upon her spite, and it was no fault of hers that I was not ignominiously dismissed from the Palais-Royal. Luckily, the Duc d'Orléans had enough distaste for her to deny her this service, even if he had possessed no liking at all for me.

From my exile from Court, I date the evil reputation which I have done my best to maintain. The fishwives of the market laid a host of adventures, some true, some false, to my account, and certain fishes were christened after me. I laughed at this celebrity. The Duc d'Orléans, as disgusted as I was with the Court of Louis XIV and his bigots, was thoroughly satisfied with my skill; I was already almost wealthy; I had all that a man of my character and temperament could desire, or rather, I desired nothing more than that my prosperity should be continued.

Amongst the beauties, facile or otherwise, whom I procured for the insatiable appetite of the Duc d'Orleans, I have not forgotten Madame Ledru, the wife of the ironmonger, nor, above all, the hardly courteous finger-marks of her Maritana. The Palais-Marchand was the centre of my expeditions; I knew every one there, down to the lap-dogs; but, in revenge, I was not known myself in person. I had abducted a score of tradeswomen, seduced a score more, and found not one cruel one among them. By turns, I made myself young or old, abbé, soldier, or cit. It was in my abbé's dress that I introduced myself into M. Ledru's hardware shop; he was the most jealous of all deceived husbands. His qualities were stamped on his hard and puckered features; his squint eyes, according to my observations, proved that his wife would not look askance at folk. The prude was capable of making one forget the faults of her husband, she resembled him so little: I admired in her the queenly carriage, the attractive plumpness, the glances which asked for alms—in short, a lovely woman. I had grown too scrupulous to think of anyone save the Prince; none the less, my flame burned to his intention.

I spoke of her to him, in terms which left the field free to his imagination; I vowed to him, moreover, that no words could ever come up to the reality. He desired to have ocular proof before passing to the last proof, and I took him to the hardware merchant, begging him to play his part carefully. I had concocted a little story, fashioned on the pattern of many others: he had adopted the pseudonym of Lucas, which had brought him good fortune in a previous intrigue; as for me, I passed under the name of the Abbé Dutrot. Ravannes had been excused from accompanying us; he was gambling in some hell.

"Good-day, M. Ledru," I said on entering, "I am bringing you one of my kinsmen, by trade an ironmonger, who wishes to start a shop."

"We have a complete stock at present, of the finest quality," said the merchant, getting ready to display his wares.

M. Lucas perceived at the end of the shop an object more dazzling than all the pots and pans, and his glances were aimed at it. Madame Ledru came forward, and said with a gentle air:

"My dear husband, don't these gentlemen require me?"

"What to do, Madame Ledru? Are you included in the stock, pray? These gentlemen have no time to gossip with females."

"Is it you, M. Dutrot," said the wife, advancing towards me, "who are bringing us custom?"

"I have two thousand pistols to spend, Madame," said the Prince, "and I am obliged to the Abbé for bringing me here."

"Two thousand pistols," cried the ironmonger, whose jealousy gave way before his avarice; "we will do business together, and I promise you will be satisfied."

"Here is a deposit of a thousand pistols, which I will ask Madame to count," said the Duc d' Orléans, giving the bag into the fair hands which he took the opportunity of squeezing.

"Wait whilst I write you out a receipt for the amount," answered the merchant, who saw only money in the transaction.

"What is the good?" said the Prince. "I believe you are an honest man, and I hope Madame Ledru will not forget me."

The lady knew too much of life to say no, and the husband gradually growing warm towards the man with the pistols invited us to supper the same evening. The Duc d' Orléans made play with his eyes as well as with his hands; Madame Ledru was delighted to have to deal with such an advantageous concern; the husband had no suspicion that he had aught to guard against.

The preparations for supper paved the way for love.

"My wife is making pancakes," said Ledru.

M. Lucas, on some thin pretext, ran into the kitchen, and the pancakes came none the quicker thereby. The table being set, the husband, whom I kept busy with my gestures and talk, did not think to look under it; wine and conversation animated the two lovers, who ventured all that it was possible to venture in presence of a jealous husband. Afterwards we fell to cards, and M. Lucas lost so liberally and gaily in favour of M. and Madame Ledru, that the latter's heart was completely won.

"To-morrow," said the Prince, "you shall have the other thousand pistols."

"And I will deliver you your purchases," replied the merchant. "But where, please, do you reside? I should like to pay you a visit."

"My address?" answered the Duc d' Orléans, making a sign

of intelligence to me as well as to Madame Ledru, who read between the lines.

"M. Lucas," I interrupted, "lives in the Rue Saint-Denis, at the sign of the Croix-de-Fer, and he asks you to supper to-morrow."

"You must accept, my dear husband," said the wife; "such politeness must be met half-way; promise me you will go."

"Certainly, I will go; and as you will not be there, God knows how many toasts we shall drink off."

"Ay, that you will," said I.

The separation was pathetic; M. Lucas obtained permission of the husband to embrace his wife, and the kiss was as good as ten. Madame Ledru made signs of consenting to anything for the following night. The Duc d'Orléans left her in such a state of disorder that the jealous husband very nearly perceived it.

"What is the matter with you, gossip?" quoth he.

"I have supped too well," she answered, withdrawing from his observation.

"Go to bed," said Madame Ledru to her spouse; "to-morrow you will go and inquire after these gentlemen."

I had given M. Lucas' address so casually to the ironmonger that I feared he might forget it; however, I made all my preparations. I hired the whole of the Croix-de-Fer for that day, and cleared it of travellers and servants. I had called in the services of Ravannes who was to play a passive *rôle* in the matter. I chose a sort of little cellar which seemed to me suited for my purpose. After having given my instructions to the page in the Prince's interest, I started dicing with him, while waiting for our man. It seems that the night, which brings counsel with it, had inspired the ironmonger with suspicion; he distrusted M. Lucas' rendezvous, and would not have kept it, had not his wife urged him to it, on grounds of business and honour.

I saw him in the distance from the window, and had time to descend; he met me on the stairs.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To the cellar," I replied. "M. Lucas has some choice wines which he wishes to dispose of; I beg you to come and taste them."

"M. Dutrot," said the old miser; "when our business is concluded, try and induce our friend to give my wife a sample of this wine."

"Do not trouble; M. Lucas is as generous as a prince."

We had reached the cellar by this time.

"Where is M. Lucas?" asked the merchant, stopping short.

"He is upstairs; where do you expect him to be? Not in this cellar, surely?"

I continued to advance, and, drawing close to the wall, blew out my candle at the very moment when M. Ledru passed the fatal threshold. I shut the door and drew the bolts. "What a singular joke of yours!" he said aloud, and I burst out laughing; and as soon as he began to beat and kick against the prison-door, I went to rejoin Ravannes who had orders to mount guard until I came to relieve him.

Night was falling when I returned to the Palais-Royal, where the Duc d'Orléans was impatiently awaiting me; we were soon on our way. I told him, as we went, of the husband's incarceration and the Prince was mightily amused at it. The fair tin-merchant did not expect to see both of us arrive; however, to be prepared for any event she had kept her servant wench, which seemed to me a delicate attention. It was no season for spinning out preliminaries, and M. Lucas entered the husband's bedroom without ceremony, whilst I mounted guard outside the door, at the side of the piece of virtue in the apron. M. Lucas gave the tin-merchant such a prodigious long séance that I had to devise a means of passing the time. I behaved towards the servant with all a rake's boldness, but they were too busy to hear her, when her virtue turned to fury and I had near lost my two eyes, or worse still. The struggle was maintained without a break, until there was a knock at the door.

"Open for the love of God," cried a voice which I recognised as that of Ravannes. I let him in immediately. "He has escaped," he cried, gasping for breath. "The neighbours ran in at his cries, and he is on my track."

I guessed that he was speaking of the imprisoned husband. The latter flung himself through the door which had been left open; he took the precaution to shut and double lock it, whilst I ran to warn the Duc d'Orléans, leaving the servant, the husband, and Ravannes in the ante-chamber. M. Lucas, greatly moved at this surprise, drew his sword without reflecting on the compromising state of his toilette. The husband burst in, his face all bleeding at the hands of his chaste servant, who had taken him for me.

"Madame!" he cried, at the sight of his Lucretia, who seized M. Lucas abruptly by the throat.

"Villain!" she said, "do you not know a virtuous woman? If M. Ledru had not arrived so seasonably he would have . . ."

"'Tis the same with me," bawled the pugnacious soubrette. "I had nigh been raped by this rogue of an abbé."

"Shout as much as you like, girls and women," cried Ravannes louder than them all; "but don't throttle folk. The first one who stirs I will kill."

A naked sword blade is a powerful argument. Madame Ledru let go of the Duc d'Orléans, who was half choked; M. Ledru beat his forehead, and the wench looked at herself in the glass. The Prince had just caught sight of my face, which was no less scratched than the husband's. We looked like two cocks who had been fighting; he burst into laughter, it infected all the company, even M. Ledru, who said with a sigh:

"Luckily I have arrived in time, my dear wife; it is not the fault of this rogue of an abbé who had shut me up in a cellar."

"I have had a fine escape!" said the wife, casting down her eyes.

"And how about me?" added the husband.

"And me," put in the Duc d'Orléans, rubbing his throat.

"And me," said I, feeling my bruised eyes.

"And me," echoed the servant, arranging her dress.

The Prince had recovered from his emotion; he asked for a glass of water, which the husband brought him humbly. He had seen the Orléans arms on the hilt of the Prince's sword.

"My friend," said the latter, rising to take his leave; "I do not thank you for the hospitality I have received in your house; I ask your pardon for the imprisonment you have undergone in the hostelry of Monsieur Lucas. . . ."

"Monseigneur," said the ironmonger, "I beg you to forget."

"I make you the same request; but keep my deposit, to recompense you for the scandal I have caused."

"Farewell, idiot," added Ravannes.

"Madame," resumed the Duc d'Orléans nobly, "I admire your virtue even more than your charms; I am their servitor."

The poor merchant, quite nonplussed, took the candle to escort us out ceremoniously.

"Ledru," said I, as a farewell speech; "remember that a pretty woman is a dangerous beast."

This adventure, which finished as ill as it began well, persuaded the Duc d'Orléans to leave *grisettes* alone for a little. He had issued safe and sound, however, from the hands of the lady, who had given proof of admirable presence of mind; but this very impudence destroyed all the charm; at another time, perhaps, it would have seemed piquant to him. The reign of *grisettes* was over, and his imagination was tasked to replace them. "Dubois," he said to me one day, "you have spoken to me of facile but no less keen pleasures, and I am tempted to try them; I am sure that my heart at least will run no danger."

My objections were overruled by the Prince's will; all that I could obtain from him was that he would inform M. d'Argenson, the Lieutenant of Police, whenever he wished to betake himself into suspicious haunts. The Duc d'Orléans was so impetuous in his desires that he would brook no delay. He commanded me to go as ambassador extraordinary to M. Levoyer d'Argenson.

This lieutenant of police, who was more able even than La Reynie, knew the Court and the town by heart; he maintained intimate relations with many great nobles, who paid him well; every day he was received in private audience by Madame de Maintenon; this was how she was so promptly informed of all that was passing. On the other hand, M. d'Argenson used to write to Madame, who thus swelled the budget of her correspondence. This sort of espionage was highly profitable, and the King, by nature curious, loved to have all the events of Paris related to him in detail. Since then, the Duc d'Orléans and I have pensioned d'Argenson, who rewarded us with services and confidences. He had so many eyes and ears at his command, that nothing remained unknown to him; he penetrated into families, and the Court was not beyond the reach of his jurisdiction; a time came when he informed me of every pretty girl who entered Paris. D'Argenson's heart was more humane than his face; he was an ugly likeness, in all save horns, of the devils that are represented in church pictures. His eyes sparkled with intelligence, but his mouth was so disproportionately large, his thick eyebrows were set in so terrible a frown, that one could not see him without fear. He was the terror of thieves, and Saint-Simon called him the Minos of the police.

With this hideous appearance, there was goodness in his soul; from caprice he would often push severity to excess, and carry indulgence to the point of weakness. Above all, he loved money, and hoarded it, seeing that last year they found in a cupboard in his closet at the ministry a sum in gold, with a label, which I have preserved, bearing these words, written with his own hand: "*Honour is good, but money is better.*" This avarice was due to his having been poor, when he was still only lieutenant-general of Angoulême. I have been poor, too, but if I love money, it is in order to employ it for my pleasures. Since then, I have had bonds of friendship and interest with d'Argenson, and I found the inward man amiable, jovial, and a free liver.

I had my name announced, coupled with that of the Duc d'Orléans, and he received me with the effusion of a friend of fifteen years standing.

"It is you, my dear Dubois," said he; "you think you see me for the first time; but I have met you in worse company."

"It is enough that you were in it, Monsieur, to change its reputation. Lord knows whither your office may not take you, with all the innocence in the world!"

This exordium led me suddenly to broach the motive of my visit; M. d'Argenson, without appearing astonished at the trivial tastes of the Duc d'Orléans, answered, with an air of zeal, that he would watch over the Prince everywhere, provided that he were forewarned in the morning. "I should long since have proposed to his Royal Highness," said he, "to protect his amusements, if I had not feared to cross him by seeming initiated in his conduct. But the sons of His Majesty have also had their hour, and several are still as wild as ever. For instance, last week, if I had received orders, I would have arrested your ironmonger of the Palais. As for you, M. Dubois, who may be almost said to hold the post of a lieutenant of the police of amours, count at all times on my desire to be of use to you."

The Duc d'Orléans could penetrate without fear into the most ill-famed places; he sent word to M. d'Argenson, in the morning, as to the quarter in which he would spend his evening, and a detachment of spies kept watch round the house at the hour fixed. The Prince never went alone; I had made myself his indispensable squire in this kind of adventure; we usually chose a third culprit from amongst the pages or the friends of the

Palais-Royal. We sometimes led away the Comte de Simiane, who plumed himself on baulking his wife of that which she recovered elsewhere with usury.

Amongst many adventures, which smell too strongly of the places where they occurred, to be written down, there was one well calculated to disgust the Prince with the damsels he had preferred to the *grisettes*. One evening, the Duc d' Orléans was seized with so sudden a desire to make an excursion to the house of the Cambray, that the lieutenant of police was not forewarned. Ravannes and I were of the party; the Cambray, who was young enough to have no need to exploit the youth of others, gave us an honourable reception, during which the profane were excluded. The door was not shut securely enough to resist three officers in whom wine had excited tender inclinations. They became irritated at the refusal they met with, in spite of us, and especially at the privilege we had secured of sending the public hungry away. They burst in the doors and forced themselves into our presence, who were but ill prepared to meet an assault of this nature. They had drawn their swords, and the Duc d' Orléans had barely the time to present the point of his own to them. "Let us kill these three rascals," they cried, lunging at the Prince and Ravannes, who kept them at bay, in spite of the disadvantage of numbers and of being on the defensive; one of them noticing the disorder of fear in me, as well as that of dress, put himself in position to attack the defenceless part of me; the Prince brought him to the ground with a thrust in his left breast. Then there was a concert of screaming women. "Wretches," cried the Prince, "you deserve a greater chastisement for your cowardice." The officers lowered their swords, while they looked at their comrade's wound. "Let a surgeon be sent for," continued the Prince. "Gentlemen, I do not think you will talk of our encounter, which does not redound to your honour. I am the Duc d' Orléans."

CHAPTER XXII

AXIOM OF LOUIS XIV—PÈRE DE LA RUE—DUBOIS' INTRIGUE—MADEMOISELLE D'ORLÉANS — HER PORTRAIT — HER VICES AND EDUCATION—THE DUC DE BERRI—HIS PHYSICAL AND MORAL PORTRAIT — MADAME DE SAINT-SIMON — THE CHAMBER-MAID OF M. DE BERRI—CONFIDENCE TO THE DUC D'ORLÉANS — THE MARRIAGE—ITS CONSEQUENCES — DUBOIS MEETS HIS WIFE

Louis XIV had said in presence of the Maintenon: "I do not wish my grandchildren to have mistresses; it is prejudicial to their health and their religion." These words of the great King announced to Europe that the Duc de Berri was ripe for marriage. I should find it hard to believe that he had not already disobeyed his grandfather on the article of mistresses, for there are always venal women in the vicinity of princes, and the Duc de Berri, however pious he might be, would not have waited till the age of twenty-four to investigate the matter; however, he married a Princess more precocious than himself.

Madame d'Orléans was desirous that her eldest daughter should marry the Duc de Berri, and the two favourites opposed her pretensions, for fear lest the Duc d'Orléans should reap some advantage from this marriage. They were still far, however, from thinking of the Regency. Madame la Duchesse, who, under these circumstances, offered her daughter to the young Prince, had every chance of seeing her accepted. It required a Jesuit and Dubois to frustrate these fine projects.

There is no one so fit as a Confessor to manage an affair successfully. The Confessor of the Duc de Berri was Père de La Rue, a Jesuit, I believe, in his mother's womb. This La Rue, who is still alive and prospering, has always been a man of two faces, of a reddish complexion, honeyed speech, and circuitous conduct. I have never liked him, because I knew him too well, and whoever judged him from his false and hypocritical exterior would have run no risk of being deceived in him. It is for this reason I once said that for so skilful a deceiver his face

was hardly suitable. To see his little oblong head set deeply between his two shoulders, his nervous movements, his large hands and enormous feet, one would not have suspected him of as much wit as he possessed. The great Corneille estimated his talents so highly as to translate his Latin verses into French.

"There is genius beneath that robe," said he.

By that may be understood, perhaps, the genius of evil.

Indeed, the Père La Rue went to convert the Calvinists in the Cevennes, with the eloquence of fire and sword. In the towns he "performed" sermons, to use his own theatrical expression; his finest mission was that of Montauban, where he drove out three devils by the imposition of hands. I have a notion that these devils were of the female sex, in spite of the Jesuit antipathy. Oh! what an artful robber of inheritance he was! By this means he amassed the huge fortune which enabled him to build the house of the Society of Jesus at Pontoise. The legitimate heirs started several suits against him, but they were never brought to a conclusion for the honour of the order. He engulfed the immense property of Madame Colin, widow of a farmer-general. The testament, which made him universal legatee, was attacked by Mademoiselle Charon, a kinswoman of the deceased; they had to have recourse to strong measures to prevent a terrible scandal; and Mademoiselle Charon, imprisoned without any form of trial, was constrained to silence. Père La Rue composed a treatise upon hypocrisy, in which he painted himself after nature. He believed all things permitted him, because he permitted all things to himself; his mind followed the devious ways of his character. There was nothing he would not do to earn money, and he spent much of it in gaming, when women and good fare left him any to spend. He was outwardly of the order of Saint-Francis; at least he boasted of it. I know no more powerful preacher than he, before his voice failed him. Baron, who would have been as fine in the pulpit, as he was grotesque on the stage, made a labour of love of forming this knave La Rue, who paid him for his lessons with his friendship, his dinners, and his hardly Jesuitical comedies. I have often seen La Rue behind the grating of a box at the Opera and at the Comédie, and he said to the King, who reproached him with this scandal, that he went there to study his profession of preacher. This excuse suggests a criticism of the actors' declara-

tion. But La Rue preferred the actresses to these last; they did not treat him as a Jesuit. It was thus that the nature of our common acquaintances had brought as into relations; when we met, each of us might have said that it was in mighty bad company. I leave you to imagine in what place we met most frequently.

"We are good friends," I said to him one day, "and it is our interest to be so. To tighten our bonds, would you like the hand of one of my Princesses for your Prince?"

"Willingly, on condition that you pay me in ready money for the superior honour I do you."

"You drive a bargain to-day?"

"As every day; nothing can be had for nothing."

"I promise you in the Duc d'Orléans' name, a gratification of a hundred thousand livres, and you are to rid us of Mademoiselle."

"Help me, on your side, and we shall attain our end, in spite of Madame la Duchesse, who has not deigned to have recourse to my services."

"The negotiation on which we are embarking is difficult; the Maintenon cabal is opposed to this marriage."

"Never mind; Père Le Tellier will not be more cunning than the late Père La Chaise."

"In the first place, you will have odious slanders to refute. . . ."

"To refute them is to appear to attach credit to them. I know that quite recently there has been open talk of a portrait of Mademoiselle painted by her father, who did not think of draping his model."

"He imagined he was working from the antique, and the artist took the place of the father."

"To conclude, I will interest the Society in my project, and the ceremony will take place in a month's time or never."

I had not waited for the Duc d'Orléans' permission to set about marrying his daughter, who was not so innocent as her age might have led one to believe. I had in her a dangerous rival, whose influence over the Prince — an influence which grew with the growth of the Princess—I had to combat. This marriage, in its kind, was a combination no less profound than the alliance of 1717. I hoped by it to remain alone in the good graces of the Duc d'Orléans, who often neglected me

for his dear daughter. Finally, I was acting in the interest of my master, who, by his abandoned conduct, gave only too much handle to his enemies. A Prince of the Blood ought to attach more importance than an abbé to his reputation. There are also certain things which one can not endure with indifference; criminals who see their own image everywhere, had dared to accuse the Prince of a criminal love for his daughter. This atrocity has been perpetuated since the death of the latter, and it is unfortunate that the Regent never did anything to justify himself against such a terrible accusation. On the contrary, the affection he bore his daughter found vent in such follies and extravagances, as were very liable to give credibility to a situation which did not and could not exist. I have often reproached him with his lightness in this matter; he has answered me, laughing, that it was as impossible to shut the mouths of the malicious as to give venom to a sheep. In fine, by employing my authority to promote the union of Mademoiselle, with a grandson of the King, I hoped to put an end to the audacity of the agents of the Maintenon; 'tis charity, I thoroughly believe, to serve others' interests at the same time as your own. I wash my hands of what happened.

Madame said, not without an after-thought, "Monsieur loves his eldest daughter more than all his other children." Mademoiselle deserved this preference in more than one respect. I speak of her here with all the more impartiality, because she hated me with the utmost frankness. Contrary to my habit of paying my friends and my enemies in like coin, I did not reciprocate this feeling. She resembled her father so perfectly that she reminded me of Mademoiselle Charlotte at the Carmelites. It would have been more incredible if he had not loved her. Their resemblance was not only in features; they had the same wit, the same faults. Beyond these causes of sympathy, one is quoted which is rooted directly in paternal love. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, as my friend Stanhope used to say. Mademoiselle, at the age of seven years, had a grave illness, and the physicians could discover no remedy for the wasting disease which consumed her; they had even given her up for lost, when the Prince interfered to save her, although he had not been received as a doctor by the faculty. The study he had made of simples came to his aid, and his daughter

owed her life to him a second time. Hence that mutual tenderness which has furnished texts for the scandalous chronicles; hence the suspicions of magic which the Prince incurred; they made a crime out of this marvellous cure.

Mademoiselle was tall before excesses had spoiled her figure; beautiful until her skin was marked with red spots. She retained her wit and her caprices even in her last illness. Her mind, which was not distinguished by the best of taste, from lack of proper education, was manifested in a thousand forms, with a quaintness of speech, a grace of seduction which fascinated the least gallant. At an early age she had trodden under foot all that strong minds call prejudices, and her liberty ever degenerated into licence. Her eyes were no more restrained than her person, and gave credibility to all the libertine adventures that were attributed to her. She was little concerned at the publicity of her debauches, provided that she was not prevented in them. Pleasure was the only god in whom she cared to believe. Choleric and laughter-loving, naïve yet false, selfish and sensitive, she was a mosaic of vices and good qualities. In short, she was adorable, and was adored, and I would fain have burned a few grains of incense on her altar; but my grey beard alarmed her, and she had christened me *Milord*, because of my journeys to England; moreover, she treated me rather less well than a dog one loads with blows.

I paint her such as she was when a month of married life had developed her; for previously, Madame d'Orléans, who had her eye on the Duc de Berri for her, recommended her brutally to play the *Sainte-Nitouche*. Mademoiselle had been brought up very ill by chamber-maids; she sang aloud as she walked, stumbled at every step, ran, jumped, and flung herself on the ground; she might have been a boy in petticoats. Her lack of manners diverted her father, who spent hours in watching her eat till she choked, and in cutting capers like a mountebank. She danced with an ignoble air, or rather did not dance at all; she knew music, and sang correctly, if not agreeably. Later on, her voice became harsh; she was well read only in the gayest form of romances. Such was the fine education she had received at Paris and Saint-Cloud; they would have, assuredly, done better to confide her at all risks to me. But when Madame d'Orléans had taken her to Versailles to put a bridle on this piece of unruly

youth, she adorned her in a decency and virtue which imposed on the most piercing gaze. She was almost in an odour of sanctity when I undertook the task of marrying her.

The Duc de Berri was not a hunchback, because he had never carried an iron bar like his brother the Duc de Bourgogne. They said he was handsome, since a prince finds a thousand flatterers to give him this appellation, if he be not too decidedly ugly. This Prince, with his small, squat figure, his coarse obesity, his florid cheeks and straw-coloured hair, had the look and carriage of a servant. Madame de Maintenon, in concert with the Dauphine, neglected his education to such a degree that they hardly taught him to read and write. She took pleasure in humiliating his birth by the servitude in which he grovelled. A lackey could not have been worse treated. The worst was that the valets, seeing the lack of consideration shown him, thought themselves authorised to act likewise. The ladies of the Dauphine, with whom he was thrown night and day, addressed him as familiarly as if he had been a slave bought in the market: "Berri," they said to him, "come here; shut the door; bring the table nearer; fetch me my work, my scissors"; and Berri humbly obeyed.

Another would not have issued safe and sound from the hands of these virtues, but the poor Prince had piety enough to withstand all these young ladies. As for wits, I am assured he had his share as a child; there was a host of pretty sayings of his quoted at the time; but he became stupid as he grew up, either that superstitious practices and his piety had narrowed his mind, or for some other reason. Madame said phlegmatically that he shared the fate of Parisian children, who show great intelligence in their youth, and become stupid subsequently. It is possible again that his stupidity was due to the fear he had of the King; I have seen him shut his eyes when His Majesty passed, and answer his questions with a stammer like a drunken man. For the rest, he avenged himself on his inferiors for the respect and repression imposed on him with Madame de Maintenon; he tortured his little world without pity. M. de Saint-Simon, who flattered himself that sooner or later he would see him ascend the throne, had obtained his confidence and followed him like his shadow.

It was to the latter I addressed myself in order to hurry on the marriage which I had more at heart than the future pair.

M. de Saint-Simon received me with the haughtiness of his nobility, and yet with the consideration due to my position in the household of the Duc d' Orléans.

"M. le Duc," said I, "you would do us a great favour by condescending to busy yourself, however little, with this affair."

"Monsieur," he replied, "I shall wait until His Royal Highness has given me the order to treat with M. de Berri."

"Not so; the Duc d' Orléans, for reasons known to himself, wishes to remain neutral in this negotiation; but he promises you a place as lady of honour for Madame la Duchesse de Saint-Simon with the new Duchess."

"Are we to see you, M. Dubois, thrust into some new office?"

"No, Monsieur, the Prince's bounty renders all solicitation unnecessary to me; he has protected me as though I were a man of quality."

"Well, I see nothing improper in this alliance, and I will repeat my opinion to M. le Duc. It is good to have the right of free speech with princes. It is a condition of my rank and nobility."

I left this proud lord very well disposed to our projects, thanks to the lady of honour whom I had nominated on my own account. I wasted neither my time nor my measures; I went to Madame escorted by Massillon, whom I had taken into my confidence. I had a difficult part to play with this woman, the most adroit of the Court and the most hostile to me.

"Madame," I said, without any preliminary, "I am here to cast myself at the feet of your prudence, in the interests of your Royal family."

"What is it?" she asked; "Dubois, you have too concerned an air to be as disinterested as you pretend."

"M. Massillon," said I, "is a guarantee of the rectitude of my intentions; it concerns the marriage of Mademoiselle with H.R.H. the Duc de Berri."

"It is too great an honour for that little clown, crusted over as he is with rusticity."

"Madame," said Massillon, "it will put a stop to rumours most insulting to Monseigneur le Duc d' Orléans. . . ."

"I know," she interrupted with a laugh; "I have written all that in my budget; the old harridan is seeking to whiten herself by blackening others. . . ."

"Better still, Madame," I added, "she has sworn by all her gods that Monsieur de Berri shall marry the daughter of Madame la Duchesse."

"I swear by the shade of Scarron, as the ancients swore by the water of Styx, that the said marriage shall take place; not that I hold to it particularly, for the smallest Elector Palatine is worth a hundred of this unlicked cub; but we shall see whether the old harridan or I will be worsted."

"Yes," said I, in my turn, "it is worthy of you, Madame, to humiliate the Maintenon, to satisfy Monseigneur d' Orléans, and to make two persons happy."

"If I must confess to you, Abbé," she retorted, "I do not believe in the two happy persons; my informants told me yesterday that the little Berri was keeping a chambermaid, who is ugly, sallow, and black."

"Perhaps she is not a chambermaid," observed Massillon, innocently.

"Indeed she is," retorted Madame, "and he is passionately in love with her; there are true lackey's tastes for you!"

Madame, who was always in costume of ceremony, went to see the King, to arrange the marriage which I had done more to advance than Madame d' Orléans herself. The Duc had not heard a word of it, and it was not my least difficult task to make him see reason.

"What, rascal," he cried, at the first word I broached on the matter, "by what right do you meddle in my affairs?"

"The right of necessity, Monseigneur."

"Rogue! Mademoiselle has no need of your interference to obtain a husband worthy of her. . . ."

"Faith, are you not there to provide her with one when she needs it?"

"A truce to your jests; they are not in season now."

"Let us speak with perfect frankness then, Monseigneur; Madame, Madame d' Orléans, M. de Saint-Simon, and a host of people who are your friends, have negotiated this marriage. . . ."

"No matter if the devil had a hand in it; it shall not take place."

"It is fine, it is great to be above the reach of calumny, Monseigneur. . . ."

"Stop, unhappy man, I will have your tongue cut out if you

repeat those iniquities! . . . To be sure, Dubois, this alliance is advantageous for my daughter and for me; again, I must marry her sooner or later. . . . But, truly, I am mighty fond of the child."

Two or three interviews conducted on this plan completed the Prince's conversion. As for the King, he heeded only reasons of State, and, giving Madame the victory over the Maintenon, consented to the marriage, which satisfied no one's hopes, not even my own. Père La Rue, who had sweated blood and water to compel the Duc de Berri to marry any woman except his chambermaid, obtained only an abbey, instead of the hundred thousand livres I had promised him; he revenged himself on me; Madame de Saint-Simon was appointed lady of honour to the Duchesse de Berri, but her husband had not the high authority which he hoped for in the Prince's household; finally, for myself, whilst I was congratulating myself on reigning supreme at the Palais-Royal, I saw with sorrow that Madame de Berri had not renounced the empire she exercised over her father. The Duc d' Orléans reproached me with having urged her to this marriage; the bride bore me no less of a grudge; Madame d' Orléans said everywhere that I had sacrificed her daughter; Madame thought I had been paid by one, or, perhaps, by both parties to the negotiation; there was no one, not even Massillon, who did not repent having had a hand in my intrigue.

The husband and wife both alike cursed the position in which they found themselves; the ceremonies of the wedding were very brilliant; but the first night discord was introduced into the nuptial bed. By the next morning the bride had gained in haughtiness and boldness as much as the poor bridegroom in dulness and timidity. From henceforth, the little Duchess began to flout and thwart him in the smallest matter without any restraint or thought of what was befitting. She made a jest of him on every occasion, and exhibited him as a learned animal. The Duc de Berri took refuge in his dull bigotry, and was not safe from her ill-nature; she forced him to break his fasts and eat meat on Fridays, to stay away from Mass, and was prouder of this than if she had gained indulgences. She went so far as to endeavour to sow discord between her husband and the Duc de Bourgogne, in her hatred of the Duchess; but the two brothers remained as united as before her good offices. The Duc de

Berri thanked the good God when he had obtained a separate chamber. He consoled himself, moreover, in all honour with his chambermaid, who captivated him until his death. This creature had no other charm than her perseverance. One day the Duchesse de Berri surprised them amidst their intimate confidences; instead of appearing indignant, she burst into a great fit of laughing, making the sign of the cross; her good spouse did not budge, no more did his mistress.

"Monsieur," said his wife, "change nothing in your manner of life; we will continue to live amicably, provided that you leave me on my side to do as I please; otherwise I will tell the King everything, and your Sultana will not even be buried in consecrated ground."

The threat brought about a mutual agreement; the chambermaid was not separated from her Prince of the Blood, and Madame de Berri recouped herself a hundredfold for her husband's infidelities. I could tell fine stories; I shall be careful not to say all I know of her.

Whilst I was so hotly engaged with the marriage of another, my own was recalled to me in a manner sufficiently disagreeable. I thought no more of my wife than if I had never had one; the rascal took it into her head to think of me. One morning when I was working with the Prince at the Palais-Royal more seriously than usual, His Royal Highness, grieved at the separation from his daughter, gave vent aloud to equivocal reflections:

"Alas! Dubois," said he, "how far better to be celibate! I know nothing sadder than marriage."

"I agree with you, Monseigneur," I answered absently, "and when one has committed the folly, the only remedy is to say to one's chaste spouse: '*Bonsoir, ma mie!*' I am delighted, for my part, with the expedient."

"Plague!" cried the Prince, "are you one of the great confraternity, M. l'Abbé?"

"Lord! Monseigneur, it is not worth mentioning."

Suddenly an unusual noise was heard in the ante-chambers; the Duc d' Orléans, faithful to a schoolboy fault of his, put his ear to the door to discover what was the matter. I did not withstand his bad example; the servants were disputing keenly amongst themselves, and a shrill woman's voice made me tremble.

"Certainly, I shall go in," she said; "I will see my husband."

"Her husband!" echoed the Prince, looking at me; I grew pale and said not a word.

"Yes, rogues that you are," she went on, "I am not mad nor drunk; it is the Abbé Dubois who is my husband."

"You!" cried His Highness.

"It seems so, Monseigneur; I must have got married without noticing it."

"Let her come in," said the Prince, opening the door, which he closed behind my genuine wife, who had grown passably plain in the thirty-five years since I had left her, or, rather, she had left me; yet she was a beauty for her age, and I understood when I saw more ravages on her face than in her toilette, that she had lived by her own industry before having recourse to mine.

"Do you mean to say you dare show your face before me, slut?" said I.

"Certainly," she answered with effrontery; "a husband owes his wife a maintenance."

"Perhaps you will have the face to ask it for your children also?"

"No, I have pity on your purse; but in short, my dear Abbé, you ought to be grateful to me for taking so long to come; I waited until my resources were exhausted before applying for a little share of your great fortune."

"A place at the Carmelites you would say."

"Ungrateful man! for thirty-five years I have been able to support myself, and you refuse to help me now you are a millionaire."

"I should soon cease to be one, if all the likes of you came to live at my expense."

"Listen, Dubois," said the Duc d'Orléans, "be generous for once in this life; it will bring you happiness in the next."

"Much obliged, Monseigneur; but what can be done for this baggage?"

"Not much," he answered, with a laugh.

"Let us sign an agreement," I said to Pierrette; "in return for a pension of six hundred livres which I will make you like a good husband. . . ."

"I must have twelve hundred livres, or I will promise nothing," she answered.

"M. l' Abbé consents," interrupted the Prince.

"This old jade sells her silence dear," cried I; "however, I agree to the twelve hundred livres, but on condition that she forgets our marriage. . . ."

"I should have never remembered it," she replied, "but for the embarrassment in which I found myself."

"Yes," I continued; "but you will never speak of it, no matter to whom."

"What! do you think me such a fool as to wish to injure myself?"

"Well, let it be a bargain then, my pretty one, and I will be the Abbé Dubois as before."

"Until the end of the ages, if it is your good pleasure."

We were sufficiently bound by our mutual interests to be able to dispense with a double bond; Pierrette, during the time of our separation, had fully exhausted her youth and beauty; our arrangement once concluded, we met without anger. The Duc d' Orléans, put in a good humour by this rencontre, interrupted the volleys of questions we hurled at one another. He wanted Pierrette to relate to him in detail the adventures of a life which had been occupied day and night, and I vow that her recital surpassed anything I could imagine. I confess that the Abbé Dubois consoled himself for all at the husband's expense. Finally, the Prince rewarded her for the pleasure she had given us, at little cost to herself, and since that day she has been as punctual in calling every quarter for her pension as we have been in paying it. That has been the limit of our conjugal relations.

CHAPTER XXIII

DEATH OF M. LE PRINCE, M. LE DUC, AND THE PRINCE DE CONTI—PROPHECY OF NOSTRADAMUS—PÈRE LE TELLIER, THE KING'S CONFESSOR — SMALL - POX — DEATH OF MONSEIGNEUR—SICKNESS AND DEATH OF THE DAUPHINE AND DAUPHIN—THE AUTOPSY—CALUMNIES AGAINST THE DUC D'ORLÉANS—THE ACCUSATION OF PÈRE ARNOUX—THE DUC D'ORLÉANS INSULTED BY THE PEOPLE—HIS JUSTIFICATION TO THE KING—MADAME DE VERRUE—THE ANTIDOTE—CONFRONTATION WITH THE DUC DU MAINE

It would seem as though death were interfering in the interest of the Duc d'Orléans; his enemies were the first to die, and then Louis XIV saw his children and grand-children successively disappear. In 1709, M. le Prince succumbed to a lingering malady which degenerated into insanity. He began by weighing in his hands all that entered his body and then all that issued from it. Having discovered that the weight was not exactly the same in the two operations, he deemed himself a dead man, in spite of the doctors who exerted themselves to prove the contrary; he moreover took the fantasy to confess every day. His reason returned to him a moment before he passed away, and he said to the persons surrounding his bed:

"Good-bye, ladies and gentlemen, I feel that I am departing to return no more; of all that I leave on earth I regret only Chantilly!"

The same year the Prince de Conti brought his worries and his debauches to the saddest possible termination; in his last moments he desired to get drunk, in order that he might pass from life to death without thinking of it, but his confessor commanded him to refrain out of penitence. In 1710, M. le Duc rejoined his father with like suddenness; he had some of the blood of the Condés in his veins, for on his deathbed he composed a rollicking song which he sang as a sort of *De Profundis*. We were but slightly affected at these three deaths, and the

Court, like ourselves, hardly noticed them; these three Princes, since the Italian and Spanish campaigns, had mixed themselves in the cabal which had so much annoyed the Duc d'Orléans. If the dead have any concern in this lower world, they certainly inspired the horrible calumnies which were shortly to pursue him.

One day, when His Highness was possessed by strange thoughts and presentiments, I was turning the leaves of a volume of Nostradamus, his prophecies, with an indifferent air. I had never put any faith in astrologers or their jargon, but I have often met with singular coincidences; I can easily concede that a feeble mind may surrender to these false proofs of a ridiculous art. I was brought up in my perusal by one of these remarkable resemblances; I uttered an exclamation which roused the Prince from his reverie.

"What is it, Abbé? Is it your wife again?"

"Listen, Monseigneur," said I, without replying to this pleasantry, "here is something which concerns you, imagine that I am wearing the diviner's ring:

> "'Quand par Ormus viendront gens de passage,
> En l'antre obscur ira le vieux lion,
> Sera de l'Orléans fait grand usage,
> Et d'ici, bâtard, ta punition.'" *

"Dubois," he asked, with a shudder, "is that written?"

"See; century 145. I do not know if I understand the language of prophecy, but in this quatrain I see distinctly the death of Louis XIV, the regency, or, perhaps, the reign of the Duc d'Orléans, and the disappointment of the legitimatised bastards."

"Indeed, you only have to explain *Ormus* as France, to make the sense complete; as to the *gens de passage*, go and see if they are come!"

"Incredulous as you are, reflect that the possible approaches the impossible; I swear to you, Monseigneur, it is not the first time I have thought of the high destiny which awaits you after the King's death."

* When through Ormus shall come the folk of passage,
The old lion shall go to the obscure cave,
Great use shall be made of the Orléans,
Whence, bastard, comes thy chastisement.

"That of premier Prince of the Blood, that is all."

"You forget that already M. le Prince, M. le Duc, and the Prince de Conti are dead!"

"Already—you make me tremble."

"See now how many lives stand between you and the Crown."

"Dubois, you might be overheard, and the Maintenon would be the woman to poison somebody to work my ruin!"

"I think you would be the first one poisoned; but, between ourselves, Monseigneur is fifty years old; the Duc de Bourgogne is in weak health; the King of Spain is not a rival to be feared; the Duc de Berri is your son-in-law, the two sons of the Duc de Bourgogne are very young; as for the bastard princes, they will never come to the throne in spite of the History of France of Père Daniel, who wants to revive royal bastardy."

"My dear Dubois, one may think all that, but it is imprudent to say it."

"No, Monseigneur, in the Palais-Royal, the walls have not ears and eyes as in the palace of Nero, and castles in the air are not crimes of state."

"I beg you to say no more about these mad ideas; no one has a right to dispose of the future. I recommend you to keep silence as to this interview; it might receive a bad interpretation."

By an incredible chance, which could only have been brought about by the Maintenon and the Duc du Maine, the *Century* of Nostradamus was right against all the probabilities; the event fulfilled our hopes, and what happened was so skilfully perverted by the Duc d'Orléans' enemies that he was nigh being crushed beneath the weight of accusations. Père Le Tellier, Confessor of the King after the death of Père La Chaise, was the ostensible author of this iniquity.

This Père Le Tellier was the *âme damnée* of the Maintenon, so skilled in winning over the King's confessors; there was an interchange of good services between them. Le Tellier completed the ruin of the Duc d'Orléans in the King's opinion, who saw only through the eyes of his confessors and mistresses; chance, or, perhaps, poison, came to the aid of the blackest perfidy ever imagined. The dreadful conspiracy had no less an aim than to bring a Prince of the Blood to the scaffold.

Monseigneur, on rising from table, went to the chase in the direction of Meudon; he became separated from his suite, and,

being thirsty, entered a villager's house to refresh himself and inquire his way. He found no one but an old woman sitting by the bedside of a sick man.

"My God, Monsieur," she said, "I am alone with my poor son; my husband has gone to fetch the Blessed Sacrament."

"Your son is not well?" inquired the Grand Dauphin, who had always a word to say.

"Indeed, no, my good gentleman, the small-pox is a dreadful disease. . . ."

"He has small-pox!"

He went out quickly, perturbed in spirit; he ran till he was out of breath, and when he had rejoined his followers, he said to them with terror:

"I have just seen a man sick of the small-pox."

He returned in great gloom to the Château, and on the morrow took to his bed, never more to leave it. The doctors arrived. 'Tis an attack of gout, said one; apoplexy, said another. All diseases were enumerated except the small-pox, whatever he might say to persuade the faculty. The drugs they prescribed him prevented the disease from showing itself, and Monseigneur must have had a real disgust at dying, in spite of the absolutions with which he was supplied. He was carried to Saint-Denis without being embalmed, and with no pomp.

This death, sudden as it was, and lamely explained by the doctors, gave impetus to the sinister rumours which circulated at the Court and in Paris; the Duc d'Orléans paid no attention to them. Madame, who had seen the dying man, went about declaring that the doctors had killed the Grand Dauphin by drying up the small-pox pustules; slander said, more loudly than she, that the pretended small-pox was nothing else than poison which had produced the blotches on the skin. They even accused the old woman of the cottage of having poisoned the water she had given Monseigneur. Nevertheless, these rumours ceased for a time, to revive with the unexpected misfortunes of the succeeding year.

The Duchesse de Bourgogne, the darling of the King, who was amused by her queer tricks, was also affected by the Maintenon, who used her to influence the King. This Dauphine was charming when she did not exhibit herself in a horribly dirty condition. She was not even ugly when she had a colour.

Louis XIV used to take her on his knees with a familiarity which excited criticism, and when she cracked off her witticisms he would say, with a laugh: "Harlequin is not dead!" The Duchess was equally audacious in her actions, but of this the King, who could not have put up with her mode of life, knew nothing; for the Maintenon had threatened with her displeasure anyone who should denounce the doings and actions of the Savoyarde to the King. The Dauphin had the incredible good nature to love his wife, who loved so many others. He had his suspicions of what was passing to his detriment; but whenever he would have reproached her, she shut his mouth with a kiss and a glance. If I am to believe the fine stories told me, the conduct of the Dauphine was by no means exemplary; the frivolity, which the King delighted in, degenerated into all kinds of excess. She was surrounded by a seraglio of young ladies. The Maintenon, whom the Dauphine called her aunt, certainly merited another name. When the King was not at Marly, the Dauphine invited a number of young people to nocturnal expeditions in the gardens, and the initiated have shown themselves as discreet as Echo. In fine, whether it be a slander or not, it has been openly stated that the Duchess's greatest pleasure was to be dragged along the ground by her feet; truly a singular amusement for a Dauphine of France. It is true that after the marriage of the Duchesse de Berri, who commenced the same kind of life, the Duchesse de Bourgogne changed, or modified, to some extent, her own. "I wish to be more restrained than the Duchesse de Berri," she said. Of her lovers, she only retained the handsome Nangis, Commander of the Regiment of the King. Nangis was in every respect the friend of the husband, who would have been jealous of the entire world before becoming so of his beloved Nangis. The Dauphine, in order the better to hoodwink her husband, ordered Nangis to feign to be in love with the little La Vallière. The latter took the matter seriously. Madame de La Vallière surpassed the Dauphine in beauty and coquetry; she found it so amusing to be loved before her rival's eyes, that she made no secret of it. She contrived that the Dauphin should see a letter of the Dauphine to Nangis, the latter's name having been carefully erased. The good Dauphin, scandalised to the last degree by this letter, the handwriting of which he could not fail to

recognise, confided his grievance to Nangis, who had not enough eloquence to persuade him to keep it to himself. Fearing the consequences of an explanation, he left Paris without leave. The Dauphin, as clumsy as all husbands in a similar situation, treated his wife, who had the cunning of a hundred women, to a scene. She feigned astonishment, repudiating the letter and everything. Her judge, moved by her protestations, was suddenly softened; she, on her side, flew into a passion at being so unjustly accused. The Dauphin had to console her tenderly. After which she sighed, shed tears, and cried:

"The day is drawing near when I must die."

"Die!" repeated the Dauphin, with a shudder, "and why?"

"Alas! an astrologer of Turin, who drew my horoscope, predicted to me that I should die in my twenty-seventh year, and through your fault."

"Do not believe in predictions, they are the work of Satan."

"I believe so much in them, that I am going to prepare myself for any event. But tell me, please; you can not remain without a wife, on account of your rank and piety; whom will you marry?"

"I hope that God will chastise me in some other way than by your death, and if this misfortune were to befall me, I should never re-marry; for a week later, I should follow you to the tomb."

The Dauphin sealed his reconciliation as well as was possible for a bigot who fasted and prayed as he did; but the Dauphine, having sent for Nangis to obtain an explanation of the unlucky letter, heard with an inconceivable despair of his abrupt departure; she vented her anger on the vases and the furniture in her apartment, and this temper terminated in an attack of nerves. She returned to her senses, saying: "It is all over, I shall not recover!"

An attack of measles announced itself in copious sweating when she went to bed; she rose imprudently to write to her friend Nangis; the doctor Chirac arrived and compelled her to go to bed again; he bled her in the foot, contrary to the opinion of Madame, whose German obstinacy had some good in it. The bleeding over, from being red and burning, she turned icy-cold and pale.

"Dear God!" cried Madame, "I would sooner they had bled me than Madame la Dauphine!"

"Would you set yourself up as more skilful than these gentlemen?" said the Maintenon angrily, pointing to Chirac, Boudin, and Fagon.

The latter fell to laughing, and Madame left the room, saying:

"We shall see what will be the result of this."

From this time the illness of the Dauphine took a turn for the worse, and the certainty which she felt of not recovering, doubtless contributed to her death. The King came every other moment to visit her, imploring doctors and apothecaries to restore his beloved daughter to him; nothing could be done; delirium, confession, were followed by the death agony; the Dauphine expired in the arms of Louis XIV.

It was like a thunderbolt; I happened to be with the Duc d'Orléans at the moment when he received the news of this death; he raised eyes and hands to Heaven in an uneasy silence.

"Monseigneur," I said, "I dreamed last night that the Dauphine was dead."

He looked at me fixedly, and made no answer; meanwhile, the calumnies started at the death of Monseigneur had become rooted in the public mind. It was everywhere said that the Dauphine had been poisoned. The Maintenon conducted this black intrigue; a snuff-box full of Spanish snuff, which the Duc d'Orléans had given to the Dauphine, supplied material for absurd presumptions; it was alleged that the deceased had first felt indisposed after taking a pinch. It was not the only fable with which it was sought to blacken the Duc d'Orléans. The King was prostrate with grief; the Dauphin, gloomier and more devout than of wont, shut himself up in his apartment for hours on end. In the midst of this general trouble, the autopsy of the Dauphine's body was made.

This operation multiplied the commotion; Chirac, Boudin, Fagon, and Maréchal took part in it; the whole time of the experiment was spent in heated discussions on both sides; Boudin and Fagon declared for poison, Chirac and Maréchal protested against this. The whole of the body was in its natural state; but the head, where the Dauphine had suffered so much, presented an extraordinary appearance of disorder; the brain had black spots in it, and the fibres seemed to be

broken. The doctors communicated the result of their examination to the King; the wrangle about poison commenced again, in presence of Madame de Maintenon, Père Le Tellier, and His Majesty, who was forced to impose silence upon them. However, some details of the doctors' consultation transpired.

A week after the Dauphine's death, the Dauphin was taken ill, with particular symptoms which, this time, were characteristic of poison; his body was covered with tumours and ulcers; he felt violent colics and spasms in his bowels.

Doubtless, the Maintenon was not capable of poisoning the Dauphin in order to accuse the Duc d'Orléans, but I would take no oath that it was not done to please her; as the person most interested in this poisoning was the Duc du Maine, I refrain from casting suspicion on anybody. Had it been necessary, however, I should not have hesitated.

As soon as the Dauphin's illness was made public, I remembered the *Century* of Nostradamus and ran to the Palais-Royal. The Prince was in his chemical laboratory, so absorbed in the perusal of this same *Century* that he took no heed of my arrival.

"Monseigneur," I said, "are you not going to Versailles?"

"What to do there?" he asked, as though my question had awoken him with a start.

"The Dauphin is very ill, and I am afraid of people being astonished at your not participating in the sorrows of the Royal Family."

"I doubt if my absence would be noticed any more than my presence; I might be dead, and they would not even come to sprinkle holy water on me."

"But, after all, if the Dauphin dies . . ."

"I hope they will not blame me; I have given him no snuff-box as I did to the Dauphine!"

There was a grieved irony in his words which struck me; I rose silently, and the Duc extended his hand to me, which I kissed with ardour.

"Monseigneur," I said, "do not forget that the Maintenon and the Duc du Maine will leave nothing undone to destroy you."

"They will not stop at a crime, if they can attribute it to me," said the Duc.

The Dauphin became worse and worse; the devouring fever, the fire in his bowels, and his sinister weakness, resisted all remedies; the doctors looked at one another in discouragement; as for the Dauphin, although the dangerous nature of his sickness was concealed from him, he took his last dispositions with admirable coolness. On the day before his death it chanced that he heard the coffin of his wife being nailed down in the apartment overhead; his eyes filled with tears, and he cried, raising his hand towards the direction of the sound, "Not yet!" Then he went back to his breviary, and hastened on with his prayers in a low voice; he communicated, heard the Mass, received extreme unction, and all was said.

The storm at Court was terrible, since on the previous night it had been stated in the town that the Dauphin had been poisoned; and everybody fled, with suspicion in their eyes. The King, impressed by these two deaths, so sudden and so strange, was himself in bed in a sufficiently disquieting state. He said to the Maintenon:

"You will see, it is all our deaths they want!"

Père Le Tellier, who hardly left his side, attacked the Duc d'Orléans with perfidious insinuations, arming himself with all the popular stories, with slanders, and, above all, religion. The poor King, weakened by his despair, merely said: "O my God! what must I do!" I am in possession of a report written by a certain Père Arnoux, a Jesuit, who occupied himself with chemistry, and was sometimes admitted by the Duc d'Orléans to his experiments. This Jesuit, the mouthpiece of Père Le Tellier, was one of the principal instruments in this unfortunate affair.

"*I will tell the truth, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,*" he wrote to Madame de Maintenon; "*I ask pardon of God for having seen what I have seen, heard what I have heard; the Duc d' Orléans, whom I accuse of all the poisonings which have taken place at the Court of France, has a secret closet in the Palais-Royal, where mysteries of iniquity are machinated; it is there that he often spends the night in magical operations, seconded by a German named Homberg, who boasts of possessing the philosopher's stone. He has the power of evoking devils who aid him in his criminal labours. The furnaces, alembics, unknown potents, maleficent herbs—all things in this arsenal denounce an art*

accursed of God and man. He has prepared, in my presence, poisons of which a single drop, he told me, was enough to cause death. I have noticed phials which bore on them labels with the names of MONSEIGNEUR, *the* DAUPHIN, *and the* DAUPHINE. *The Duc d' Orléans wished to predict my destiny, but I refused, for fear of committing mortal sin; I could tell also of books in Hebrew and Arabic, which I supposed to be concerned with the black art; spheres, compasses, and other astrological instruments have proved to me that this impious Prince was addicted to those occult sciences which the Church condemns. . . .*"

And the remainder of this curious document, which was given me by M. d' Argenson, is of a like crass infamy. I suppose they did not dare make use of it.

The autopsy of the Dauphin's body lent force to all these accusations, which the Duc d' Orléans only met with silence. The traces of poison were too obvious to be denied; his entrails were blackened as though they had been burnt; his heart was choked up with putrefying blood; his lungs were spotted and decomposed; only the head was intact. It was in vain that Maréchal implored the doctors to consider the King, as such a piece of news might be his death; Fagon and Boudin, acting at the Maintenon's instigation, hastened to afflict Louis XIV, who was especially inconsolable at the death of the Dauphine. He had called for her portrait, which he covered with his kisses and tears. Père Le Tellier, who held all the threads of this infernal intrigue, exhorted the penitent to treat the poisoners only as an incensed judge. M. d' Argenson had orders to make secret researches for anything which would serve for the discovery and punishment of the crime. The lieutenant of police was too devoted to the Duc d' Orléans to cause him pain; he sent for me, and advised me, as a precaution, to persuade the Prince to betake himself to a place of safety; the Duc d' Orléans, to whom I related our conversation, nobly refused to do anything which might resemble flight.

"I am innocent," he said to me, "and to seem to dread the intervention of justice would be a confession of guilt; the true authors of the crime have more to fear from justice than I."

He persisted, however, in keeping aloof from Court, and his enemies profited by the circumstance to blacken him the more.

People now remembered a similar accusation brought against

the Duc d' Orléans in 1709, by the Princesse des Ursins. It was a question of nothing less than of poisoning the King of Spain and his children; they sought to find in the deaths of the Princes a sequence of this pretended plot, as ridiculous an invention as the rest; I omitted to speak of this incident, which always seemed to me pure comedy. At a time when the Duc d' Orléans, on his return from Spain, found himself encompassed by calumnies, each one more atrocious and absurd than the last, Chalais, the inquisitor of the Ursins, came mysteriously to Poitou, after writing to M. de Torcy that he was going there on the service of the King of France. After eighteen days spent in expeditions and manœuvres, Chalais arrested a cordelier, well known for his villany in the Convent of Bressuire. This fellow cried loudly: "The Prince and I are lost." He was confined in the prison of Poitiers. After this fine stroke, Chalais repaired to Marly, had several conferences with the King, and went afterwards to Paris. Then the Duc d' Orléans' accusers redoubled in audacity, and the unknown monk had the honour of being designated as his accomplice. The Parliament, inspired by the Maintenon and Chalais, inclined towards an impeachment; the monk, who was given to oaths, strong drink, and lechery, like the rest of the monkish crew, was sent to the Bastille, where he was kept three months in solitary confinement, his only visitor being M. d' Argenson. The result of this huge scandal was the monk's silence; something even transpired of the part which they had forced him to play. Finally, the poor monk was transferred to the tower of Ségovie, where, unless he has died recently, he still remains.

I cannot conceive the folly of the Maintenon, who could imagine nothing better than to bring forward this rascally monk again in her fresh inculpation of the Duc d' Orléans. Madame des Ursins, who did not know her disgrace was so imminent, wrote that Marchand (the name of the monk) had told his jailers that all the Royal Family who died during the last three years had been poisoned, and that the Duc d' Orléans, once become King of France, would come and deliver him at the head of his armies. These puerilities, repeated, commented, distorted, gained more credence than they deserved. The lower orders, ever obstinately set on the marvellous, greeted the story of the monk as a manifest proof of the Duc d' Orléans' guilt; they were

overjoyed, moreover, to think of seeing a Prince of the Blood tried and, perhaps, hanged, like a vulgar malefactor.

This hostile disposition of the populace was already apparent, when the Duc d' Orléans accompanied Madame to sprinkle holy water on the Dauphine. The Dauphin was not yet dead. I found some pretext to excuse me from assisting at this ceremony; I confess that my sorry reputation did not completely reassure me as to my fate, in the event of the Prince's impeachment; my conscience defended me against these fears in vain. I sought to obliterate myself behind the Duc d' Orléans. I saw him return, pale, haggard, and indignant; he told me that the people had made a riot round his carriage, and that he had heard atrocious suggestions, murmurs, and cries of insult. Madame had been so aggrieved at these insults, that she had said openly through the window: "The Maintenon knows how to choose her tools!" These words might have cost her stoning.

It was far worse when the Duc d' Orléans went alone to give holy water to the Dauphin; Madame had frequently begged him to refrain, for fear of attacks more daring than before. She escaped a violent scene by staying behind at her correspondence. The Prince commanded me to accompany him, in spite of my wishes; it was a miracle that we returned; the roads through which we passed were crowded with hired wretches, who raised an appalling tumult; some pointed their fingers at the Duc d' Orléans, others made threatening gestures; I effaced myself, as well as I could, at the back of the carriage; the Prince, on the contrary, made a pretence of seeing and hearing nothing. A tall man, all in rags, came up insolently to the window and said: "Poisoners are burned on the Place de Grève!" Ravannes, who was escorting us on horseback, incensed at this indignity, drew his sword and slightly wounded the leader of the rioters, who gave himself up for dead. This was enough to make them tear us to pieces; there was a fresh frenzy of cries and insults. His Royal Highness realised the risk we all ran. "M. de Ravannes," said he, "why have you ill-treated this worthy fellow? My friend," he continued, throwing his purse to the wounded man, who was inciting the populace to vengeance, "here is a cure for you, and come and see me at the Palais-Royal." The diversion caused by this act enabled our coachman to whip his horses to a gallop, and thus we came to the mortuary

chapel. All the members of the Court who were present kept aloof from the Duc d' Orléans, and even Massillon, whom I saw in the distance, made a sign of the head to me, which suggested compassion. Our return to the Palais-Royal was cruelly anxious; cries and threats were renewed, and some of the mob were daring enough to pelt us with mud. This lasted until we had reached the Palais, in front of which a multitude of men, armed with stones, torches, and staves had assembled. The guard and the servants of the Duc d' Orléans remained on duty all night, apprehending some attack on the part of these madmen; and when they retired, towards dawn, shouting: "Faggots for the Duc d' Orléans!" the latter entered his carriage and retired to Saint-Cloud, whither came Madame to rejoin him, more incensed than ever against the "Old Hag." As for the Duchesse d' Orléans, she remained at Versailles during these alarming events.

"Madame d' Orléans," said the Prince to me, "is not the last person to accuse me."

"There remains only one door of safety," I answered; "from being accused, become accuser in your turn."

"If they compel me, I will do so."

"Believe me, Monseigneur, the Duc du Maine is not as easy in his mind as you are."

The Duc d' Orléans wrapped himself in a haughty disdain of these accusations, until the 2nd of March, when the little Dauphin, the Duc de Bretagne, died, showing the same symptoms as his father; the autopsy also furnished similar appearances. At the same time, the Duc d' Anjou * seemed *in extremis*. The consternation was at its height, and the Duc d' Orléans was singled out as a monster to the public animosity. The King, however, although he was convinced by his mistress, his confessor, and his bastard, of the guilt of his son-in-law, dared not as yet bring him to judgment. He was unwilling to cast discredit upon his family by a trial which would echo through the breadth of Europe. Meanwhile, as the Dauphine's death touched him closer than anything else, he sent for his daughter, the Duchesse d' Orléans, and sorrowfully questioned her as to what she knew. The latter was mighty careful not to bring the slightest accusation against her brother, the Duc du Maine, and she defended her husband

* Son of the Duc de Bourgogne and grandson of Louis XIV, afterwards Louis XV.

in such a manner as to allow the King to believe what he liked. Little satisfied with this enlightenment, Louis XIV summoned the Duc d' Orléans. His Royal Highness had no hesitation in obeying; but the Marquis d' Effiat, who chanced to be present, inoculated him with foolish counsels, which the Prince was weak enough to follow. I am certain the Duc du Maine had made d' Effiat his creature, and that frank courtier was a man capable of hanging his master, if he found it to be his interest. The Duc d' Orléans, cast down at all these horrors, was introduced into the presence of the King, who fixed a severe and scrutinising gaze on him. This glance caused the Prince to lose countenance; he burst into tears, and flung himself at the King's feet; the Maintenon had been careful to ensure Père Le Tellier's presence at this interview.

"Sire," cried His Royal Highness, "they accuse me of an awful crime which I abhor more than anybody. Allow me to constitute myself a prisoner in the Bastille, and inquire into the case."

"That is a course to which there can be no objection," said the confessor.

"No, Monsieur," said the King, "if you are guilty, God will punish you; if you are not . . ."

"Why refuse me the grace of making my innocence transparent? I should not be dishonoured through having been in the Bastille, were I to leave it justified!"

"Sire," said Père Le Tellier, "I see nothing improper in sending His Royal Highness to the Bastille."

"The poor Dauphine!" said the King, with a groan, in order to change the subject. "Tell me, Philippe, could your science heal the Duc d' Anjou?"

"Mine, Sire! It is true I saved the life of my daughter De Berri, when the doctors had despaired of it; but . . ."

"Well! It is your duty to try and save us the Duc d' Anjou, who is dying."

"What, Sire!" interposed Père Le Tellier, "instead of having recourse to divine providence, you will invoke means which it disowns."

"Sire!" said the Prince, "the Duc and Duchesse du Maine have indeed blackened me in your eyes!"

"Monsieur, withdraw," replied the King; "before you accuse, think to defend yourself."

The Duc d' Orléans sank back into a chair; the King made a sign to his confessor, and they both went into the oratory.

Meanwhile, the Duc d' Anjou, who now reigns as Louis XV, seemed unlikely to recover. His body and face were covered with tumours; he refused the breast of his nurses, and writhed in long convulsions. Madame de Ventadour, the child's governess, in spite of the King's express prohibition, succeeded in saving it. She had heard from Madame de Verrue, a whilom mistress of the King of Sicily, of how an antidote given her by the Duke of Savoy, had snatched her from a certain death; but Madame de Verrue, being ignorant of the nature of this antidote, could not indicate it to Madame de Ventadour, who was in despair. Madame de Verrue had sold Madame two hundred gold medals which she had stolen from the King of Sicily, and for which she could not obtain payment; she took advantage, therefore, of this debt, assiduously to frequent Madame, who had kept her informed of everything; this condition was reciprocal between the two busy-bodies. Madame de Verrue happened to speak of the antidote, which she regretted; she was ignorant of the use it was to serve.

"My child," said Madame, "I will write to the Duc d' Orléans, and this evening you shall have your antidote."

She wrote, and the Prince, who was at leisure, sent her what she asked. The Duc d' Anjou took this antidote from the hands of Madame de Ventadour, who waited for a successful issue, before divulging her temerity. The King called her his beloved daughter, and wished to know whence the antidote was procured. Madame de Verrue was summoned, and revealed the mystery; Louis XIV was astonished, but retained his ill-feeling against the Duc d' Orléans, to whom he said only this:

"Monsieur, if you had desired, these four deaths would not have happened."

His Royal Highness was in consternation at such ingratitude.

As the cabal persisted in spreading rumours and alarms, I dreaded to see the poisonings resumed.

"Monseigneur," I said to the Prince, "d' Effiat is a bad adviser; it is no fault of his that you are not, at this moment, in the Bastille."

"Indeed," he answered, "Saint-Simon has made me see the error of my action, which might have been profoundly injurious to me."

"Allow a man who has not been bought by your enemies to offer you a piece of good counsel amongst a thousand."

"The best would be, I think, to send me to join Monseigneur, the Dauphine, the Dauphin, and the little Dauphin."

"Very well! risk your life to save your honour; the Duc du Maine is the author, if not of these crimes, at least of the rumours accusing you. . . ."

"The Duchesse d'Orléans swears to me it is not so."

"Monseigneur, silence the Duc du Maine and Père Le Tellier, and everybody else will be silent."

"The Duc du Maine has the cowardice of a bastard; if I challenge him to a duel . . ."

"He will be afraid, and Père Le Tellier . . ."

"A Jesuit does not wear a sword."

"No; but I have an arm which will vanquish him without striking a blow."

It was a written proof of a base action committed by Père Le Tellier; Père La Rue, being pressed for money, had sold it to me, on the condition that I would make no use of it, save in a last extremity. I had promised him secrecy, and I did not betray it; the Duc d'Orléans has never revealed what it was.

"Good, my dear Dubois," said he, "you are the only one who has not deserted me; the King's confessor shall answer to me for everything."

His Royal Highness left that day for Sceaux, where the Duc du Maine's cabal met. It was in full assembly, and deliberating as to what it should decide: the Duchesse du Maine kept open court in the midst of her lovers and poets; the Marquis d'Effiat was the first figure he recognised, on entering into this company, which looked upon him as a phantom.

"Good-day, M. d'Effiat," he said; "this is not the Palais-Royal, you must have mistaken the door." He barely saluted the ladies, who were numerous, and began thus, speaking to the Duc du Maine: "Monsieur, brother-in-law, it has come to my ears that you are somewhat over zealous in your attacks against my honour; this does not please me at all, and I will beg you to give a formal denial of these reports which are ill calculated to maintain friendship between us."

"*Mon Dieu!* M. d'Orléans," said Madame du Maine, "what freak is this of yours, to come and discuss business before ladies?"

"This freak, Madame, is well worth the trouble of some attention, since, perhaps, it will avenge us for some odious slanders."

"Softly!" continued the Duchesse, "you have the air of an angry fighting-cock, and no longer that of a gallant and amiable Prince."

"M. du Maine," interrupted the Duc d'Orléans, his hand upon his sword, "swear before God and these witnesses, that you cherish no suspicion against me."

"What is your meaning, M. d'Orléans?" said the Duc du Maine.

"My meaning is to offer you my hand or the point of my sword; yes, Monsieur, your blood or my own, if you refuse me this satisfaction, so petty in comparison with the harm you have done me."

"Where is Crébillon?" asked the Duchesse; "here is, certainly, a fine tragedy worthy to match *Atreus and Thyestes*."

"M. du Maine," cried the Duc d'Orléans, in a voice of thunder, "make your choice."

"What a singular man you are!" said the Duc du Maine, to gain time; "but nothing could be juster; what must I say?"

"That you hold me to be incapable of a disgraceful action! . . ."

"Do not swear, M. du Maine," interposed his wife.

"Why not, Madame?" asked the former, trembling lest he should be compelled to fight; "I am delighted to declare that M. d'Orléans merits all my esteem, and beg him to hold me a little in his friendship."

"You hear him, gentlemen," said the Prince, withdrawing, "M. du Maine gives the lie to anyone who attributes any other language to him."

The Duchesse du Maine was so vexed at the cowardice of the "cripple," as she called her husband, that she refused to see anybody for a week. But I mistake;—she made an exception of her lovers.

The victory was the prelude to a second and more important triumph. On the morrow, the Duc d'Orléans went himself to the Jesuit convent, where Père Le Tellier was in retreat. He would not have succeeded in seeing him, if he had not given his name; all doors were open to the Duc d'Orléans. The

King's confessor began by assuming an attitude of rude insolence, which gave way to the most honeyed obsequiousness, upon the presentation of a certain paper; the wolf became a lamb, and Père Le Tellier was humiliated to the point of throwing himself on the Prince's mercy.

"I wish you no ill, Father," said His Highness, "and should be grieved to harm you; but I lie under the onus of the most unjust suspicions; I beg you to give me a little assistance in triumphing over them."

"I will do so, my son," replied the subtle priest, "for the greater glory of the Society."

This mighty storm was almost at once appeased; the people, which had been excited against the Duc d'Orléans, fell back into the respectful attitude which was due to his rank. I am convinced from this that Père Le Tellier was more powerful than the Maintenon; there was no more talk of impeachment nor of the Bastille. The Duc d'Orléans allowed time to complete the work he had begun so well. It is a very true saying that the humble suffer for the great; the one victim of this machination was poor Homberg, a German, whose modesty was even greater than his skill, and who assisted His Royal Highness in his laboratory; the worthy man worked hard for little profit. He found himself, none the less, owing to this affair, sent to prison and banished from France through the caprice of his judges. I had some money sent to him, to Leyden, where he died of grief. It was long before the Duc d'Orléans was entirely washed of calumny, which always leaves a trail, says the proverb. The example of the King, always cold and courteous towards him, but never affectionate, found only too many imitators. The Prince saw himself deserted in the *salons* of Marly and Versailles. He said one day to the Comte de Toulouse, who approached him: "Monsieur, do you not fear contagion?" Louis XIV did not pardon him till he was on his death-bed. The aversion so generally displayed for him did not extend to the Duchesse d'Orléans, who kept always under the Maintenon's wing. Madame, in disgust at the isolation of her son, begged him not to frequent the Court; I united in her supplications, and the Duc d'Orléans left the field free to the cabal directed by Villeroi, Vaudemont, Tallard, Tessé, and the little Blouin.

"I abdicate," he said to me, with a laugh; "see, I have descended into private life! . . . For all that I am premier Prince of the Blood, I may as well be satisfied to be happy."

"Will you read any more in Nostradamus?"

"It had nearly cost me dear."

"I will undertake to find a use for your leisure, as long as there are pretty girls in Paris."

"Faith! I did well to send away the Comtesse d'Argenton to the Pont-Saint-Maxence; I paid two millions for her debts, but I have bought back my liberty."

"The most difficult thing is to keep it."

Pleasure flew back to the Palais-Royal, and every week the Duc d'Orléans fell in love for a lifetime.

If I must tell my whole thought on the irreparable losses of the Royal Family, I believe the Dauphin and the Duc de Bretagne died of poison: by whom administered? It seems to me that the Duc d'Orléans had everything to lose by their death, and the Duc du Maine everything to gain.

CHAPTER XXIV

DUBOIS IN LOVE—ANNETTE THE WIDOW—DUBOIS AND THE DUC D'ORLÉANS AS RIVALS—THE BROKEN WINDOW—PORTRAIT OF ANNETTE—SAMUEL BERNARD—HIS UGLINESS—THE MARRIAGE PROPOSAL—THE DEMOISELLES LOYSON—BIGAMY—THE WEDDING SUPPER—RIGHTS OF A HUSBAND—THE SUBSTITUTE—HUSBAND AND LOVER—THE WIDOW'S DEATH—LETTER FROM MADAME DUBOIS

I THOUGHT myself capable of anything, except of falling in love; this is an adventure for which I shall reproach myself all my life, though I live to be a hundred. However, I acted as was inevitable in this affair; assuredly, it is not my fault if I developed a passion for a young woman who only belonged to me by procuration, and who hated me as vehemently as she loved another. 'Tis true that at this period I was nothing more than Abbé Dubois. Love was not then a madness for me; to-day it would be the gravest error: in becoming a Cardinal I have put my life in order.

I had studiously exploited the Palais-Marchand for the benefit of the Duc d'Orléans; maids or wives, I had found none cruel, except a certain Annette, by trade an embroideress. She was a widow, and in her husband's lifetime I had wasted time and labour upon her impregnable virtue; but, on her husband's death, I resumed my attacks in such a manner as to prove I expected an unequivocal result. The more difficulties I encountered, the more honour I thought to do the Prince with this glorious victory. I must say, for the honour of women, that she did not heed my fine phrases, refused my presents, and discouraged me with mighty hard words. She little cared whether or no I bought her wares, and when I did, felt herself no more obliged to me thereby.

"Faith!" said the Duc d'Orléans to me, one day, when I was trumpeting the charms of my widow, "since I have heard you speak so much of her, the fancy takes me to see her."

"Provided, Monseigneur, that one fancy is not succeeded by another."

"In the meantime, conduct me to this wonder of the Palais; Lord grant that she be not a virtue of the strength of your tin-wife!"

"Nay, Monseigneur, I love her too well to give her up to you."

"I do not ask you to give her up to me, since she does not belong to you."

"Not as yet, Monseigneur."

"Then you will allow me to enter the lists."

"I foresee that you will soon put me out of them."

"You look like a man in love; I tremble for you."

"And I tremble far more for myself."

We once more assumed the names and the dress of Dutrot and Lucas; the tin-merchant had gone away from the Palais-Marchand with his wife and his wares; we had no fear of being recognised. According to the plan I had arranged, the Prince, on passing Annette's shop, intentionally broke a window; he entered suddenly with an assumed air of despair:

"Heavens! Madame," he said, covering his eyes with his hands, "I am a clumsy rascal."

"Indeed he is," I added; "my friend who has just disembarked from the Lyons coach, has not yet got the fine manners and ways of Paris."

"Mademoiselle, I beg you to repair the damage," interposed the Prince, handing her his purse.

"Do not be surprised if he treats you as a Miss; he does not know you are a widow."

"Gentlemen," she answered, coldly enough to freeze the hottest gallant, "it is sufficient that this little misfortune should be the result of an accident, for me to hold you blameless, whilst thanking you for your excuses."

"The harm is done; it must be repaired," continued the Duc, holding out his purse, stuffed with gold.

"Are you mad?" I said, to prevent him discovering himself. "At how many *louis* do you value a window? Give her, rather, one to mend it. You accept, Madame Annette?"

"With all my heart, if that is all you want to satisfy you."

I dragged away His Royal Highness, who, in his astonishment

at seeing such beauty joined to such grace, could not keep his countenance. A glazier, well paid in advance, was sent to the shop, and, acting on our instructions, he talked loudly of the wealth and family of M. Lucas; but the fair shopkeeper seemed to pay no attention.

"Dubois," said the Prince, "why can I not say with Cæsar: '*Veni, Vidi, Vici!*' Annette is a treasure. . . ."

"To whom do you say it, Monseigneur? But, I am sore afraid, a treasure destined neither for you nor for me."

"Good! The inhuman widow may resist an Abbé of your appearance, but she will gladly surrender to the Duc d' Orléans."

"Perhaps, Monseigneur, if you consent to marry her."

"I! Bigamy is a strange thing, even for a Prince of the Blood."

"She is one of those virtues set on the Sacrament, and abhorring widowhood; she would marry a church rat, as long as she was married."

"Well, I want her at all cost."

"You would still require Madame d' Orléans' consent."

For the first time, I felt an egoism resembling jealousy. I did my best to dissuade the Prince from his pursuit of Annette, whom I reserved exclusively for myself. I did not take exact account of what was passing in me, because I dared not admit to myself that I loved this girl differently to all others. My happiness consisted in seeing her, in talking to her, and that to possess myself in patience. That was all I loved in Annette. Her portrait, which I made from memory after her death, is a very imperfect likeness; however, I still love to examine her large eyes veiled with the long lashes, her black and lustrous hair, and her smiling mouth. Alas! all these beauties became mine by right, but I never had more than the privilege of seeing them. This was little for a husband; it was much to a lover. I returned to weave "perfect love" with my fair embroideress, fully determined as I was to save her from the Duc d' Orléans, or, at least, to keep her for my private enjoyment. I found her more seriously preoccupied than she would have been over the broidering of a vest.

"M. Dutrot," she said to me, with an expression she did not succeed in rendering indifferent, "is your friend not coming?"

"I hope not," I answered; "he is an awkward fellow, who brings bad luck to your shop."

"Indeed, he is mighty careless; but one would judge him better were one to hear him speak."

"I do not think so; a libertine speaks as he acts."

"Is he married, please?"

"More likely twice than once, and he has many children."

"That is a pity," she said, sorrowfully.

I devoured her with my eyes, and sought to reap my own advantage from the tender feeling which inspired her for the Duc d'Orléans. I was playing my shepherd's pastoral fairly well; accursed be the intruder who came between us!

I saw a man arrive whose features were as uncouth as his intelligence, a sort of deformed dwarf, with one hump, at least, beneath his shoulders, with crooked legs, doing the polite with the rudest of airs; his hair was red, and he gaped his exaggerated mouth with an appalling smile. He is still living, and although he has poets and flatterers in his pay, I doubt if anyone will dare to give the lie to the portrait I have painted of him, jealousy apart. This agreeable personage, whom I remembered to have noticed at Court or elsewhere, was no other than the famous Samuel Bernard—a "Jew by birth, and a Jew by trade" —a millionaire banker, insolent as an upstart, sottish beyond description, and miserly or prodigal as circumstances required. I did not leave my seat, and let him dart his glances and play his part of a Croesus in love.

"My divinity," said he, in a voice to make you shudder, "here I am, once more, before the fairest feet in the world."

"I doubt whether you will get any further," I interrupted.

"Who is this Abbé?" he asked, glaring at me with a vindictive eye.

"Apparently an Abbé," I answered, to get rid of the monster.

"*Ma mie*," he resumed, "when will you leave this booth for the palace I want to give you?"

"When I wish to accept it," she said, with a dignity without prudery.

"Ha, ha!" cried the old ape, "I can procure you a place in the King's household. He calls me Samuel quite familiarly, and borrows my money as if I were his equal."

"Monsieur," she replied, "I will have no place except in my husband's house."

"Little fool," he said, with a laugh, "you ask the impossible."

"I ask nothing from you, M. Bernard," she answered, to my great satisfaction.

"Ah!" said he, "I like to be resisted; I am not accustomed to it. To show you that I bear no malice, I will buy all these trifles from you."

"I cannot sell my wares twice over," she replied.

"Good!" he cried, "I see through your subterfuge. Who is the fop who has anticipated me? I will pay him for these fripperies twice, three times their value."

"Monsieur," said I, "if you were to give me a thousand crowns beyond my bargain, I would not yield them to you."

"This is a mighty proud Abbé," he grumbled; and he went out, his vanity wounded to the quick.

I knew, without any doubt, that the widow would refuse all who did not offer her marriage. The manner in which she dismissed Samuel Bernard proved to me that she was insensible to the charms of wealth. This strange caprice seemed to me sublime, and I gave myself up to a sentiment that I dared not call love. I followed up the banker's gallantries with my own, with a similar lack of success. Annette stopped me in the midst of my urgent solicitations, and began to weep.

"See," said she, "the wretched position in which I am! The first comer thinks he has a right to talk the language of gallantry to me."

"What? Do you complain of the privilege of pretty women?"

"For shame! They would not have done it when I had an excellent husband."

"Faith! if it only needs that, I can find one for you."

"Please God! I am no mincing prude, but I hold to my self-respect, and every day I pray God to send me a husband."

"He has heard you, and assuredly your service is to be preferred to God's; here be the husband I can offer you."

"You, Monsieur l'Abbé!"

"Why not? I am well worth another. The ceremony can take place to-morrow; it is enough to conceal my collar, and change my title of Abbé for that of Chevalier."

"You are not jesting with me?"

"Heaven forbid! I am speaking frankly; and, if you accept, by the day after to-morrow the affair will be settled; you will be my wife, I shall be your husband."

"If you will not abuse a poor widow, I will repay you with thanks and devotion a thousandfold."

"You must give up your shop, for I am rich enough for both of us; and to the devil with Samuel Bernard's palace!"

"But, in your new estate, can you retain your benefices?"

"Yes; and even acquire new ones. Leave it to me. I will not marry you in any but a fair manner; say but the word, I will secularise myself, and to-morrow, the wedding."

It was agreed that, on account of my former estate, the religious portion of the marriage should be celebrated out of church, and by the "intervention" of an Abbé, who was my friend. Annette seriously desired a husband. She had thought to propose an embarrassing dilemma to me; she found herself taken at her word, and only maintained her refusals in the tone of persons who are afraid that faith will not be kept with them. I left, promising to return on the morrow with witnessses and a notary. I felt my conscience heavier than when I came there; and whatever joy I experienced at the approaching possession of such charms, I secretly addressed myself reproaches which redoubled my anxiety. I was about to embark on actual bigamy, and the fact well merited thinking twice over. I reappeared before the Prince with so piteous an aspect that he inquired if I had become eunuch to the Grand Turk.

"Very much the contrary," said I; "I am to be married to-morrow."

"You, Abbé!"

"Undoubtedly; unless you would like to take my place."

"Which?"

"At your risk and peril."

Thereupon I related to him how I had come to offer marriage to the widow, who had not required pressing for her consent.

"You see," said I in conclusion, "what a thing love is."

"It appears to be bigamy."

"Alas! Monseigneur, one is flesh and blood, so please the law, and I risk much to obtain much."

"For shame! Your first night is like to cost you dear."

"A hundred crowns, perhaps, including the priest and notary, the witnesses, the relations, and the supper."

"What diabolical ruse have you invented?"

"The simplest in the world—a secret marriage, in which the only thing genuine will be the pleasure of the bridegroom."

"Do you wish me to play the bridegroom?"

"No, Monseigneur, you shall play nobody. Only I will invite you to my wedding; you have all that is requisite for being my cousin."

"So be it. We shall have, and we shall be, all that is necessary."

On the following day, I returned to my widow, who had not slept for thinking of the ceremony. I found her more charming than ever, and my remorse did not hold good against such a wealth of graces. I had put on a town coat, smart enough to be a recommendation of its wearer. She thanked me for my goodness to her, and we talked of the marriage. I excused myself for the secrecy I wished to maintain on account of my family, which was very hostile to misalliances, and we agreed upon the hour, the place, and the contract. At eleven o'clock at night I was to fetch Annette, who was to await me with her nearest kinsmen, traders, and even working-folk, dazzled like herself by her good fortune.

I required a place propitious to my schemes, and, as I was in love, I did not consider money. I reminded me, very appropriately, of the Demoiselles Loysons, who, since they were twelve years old, had held their court in the Bois de Boulogne, where they gave private audiences in the thickets. They were pretty, not too fatigued, and with wits superior to their condition. We were the best friends in the world, and they entered into my views with the keenness which such women bring to the seduction of innocence and virtue. I hired, for two days, an apartment in the Rue Traversière, with furniture and servants. The Loysons were installed there, and I was tempted to forget with them the nearness of my marriage. Meanwhile, Manet and Forceville, my *valets-de-chambre*, who filled the place of my dear Purel, were thoroughly initiated as to how to run the risk of hanging; and thus I had a notary and a priest at my orders. A magnificent supper had been prepared, and the elder Loysons undertook to procure me some relations, aunts and cousins,

at a moderate price. I trusted to her for this office, and, curled and perfumed, a very Adonis, accompanied by the Duc d' Orléans, still disguised, I went to the shop of the embroideress, where I found a whole family, which respectfully embraced me. I escorted all this company to my hotel in the Rue Traversière, and the *fête* began. The Loysons had procured me a brilliant society, and dear friends whom I had never seen.

Manet, in a notary's robe, made us sign the contract, in which the idiot had written down the name of Dubois in full; I had the presence of mind to repair this clumsiness. Next came Forceville, disguised as an abbé, and the parody of the marriage was played to a marvel. I uttered my *yes* without stammering, and Annette responded with an air which made me believe she was grateful to me for so much love. Suddenly, a burst of stifled laughter made me start. I raised my head, and, facing me, perceived my first wife, who was enjoying the singular spectacle. I was blankly disappointed, and dreaded lest she should indulge in some outbreak; but the presence of the Duc d' Orléans, whom she recognised, imposed silence on her, and she contented herself with casting Medusa looks, which turned me to stone. I have always believed that the Prince had contrived this surprise to deprive me of the fruit of my bigamy. What did he not expect of the morrow?

I forced myself to keep a serious countenance; but, when I was withdrawing tenderly with my bride, the other, without saying a word, came and placed herself in front of me, in such a manner as to freeze my transports. I lost countenance, and, leading her into a corner, I said furiously:

"Strumpet, I could have you driven out by my lackeys; but I will allow you to assist at the comedy; only, at the first word, I will send you to rot in the Bastille."

The warning produced its effect; but the cursed Prince had her put at my side. He was also careful to secure my widow, whom he crammed with sweets and dainties. I was almost displeased that the supper proved very gay, and the princesses brought by the Loysons grew unlicensed in their merriment. I did not address a word to my real wife, who had not gained in beauty, as I had leisure to notice. I looked at my watch every moment; but the guests were little inclined to retire. At last, the Duc d' Orléans, whom these vexatious folk wearied as much

as they did me, spoke of putting the bride to bed. Madame Dubois then gave me a glance that was gleaming with malice. I informed the guests that beds were prepared for those who cared to stay; some accepted, others went away, and I was left alone with my real wife and the Duc d' Orléans. The Loysons, assisted by an old aunt of Annette's, presided over the going to bed of my widow. I was burning with impatience to see them leave the place, and was about to hurry them in good round terms, when the Duc d' Orléans caught hold of my arm.

"The time is now come, my dear Dubois," said he, "when you have need of all your friendship for me, and all your courage."

"Courage!" cried I; "I am not afraid of these things."

"I speak of an immense sacrifice; but the recompense for it will also be immense."

"Be off from here, strumpet!" I said to Madame Dubois, who was laughing in my face. "I will let you see what is the reward for spying on what I do and say."

"Quietly, Abbé! Have you the heart to ill-treat your wife on your wedding night?"

"What do you mean? It would seem as though I meant to lie with this baggage!"

"At your convenience, my husband," she said, with effrontery.

"Undoubtedly, my dear Dubois," continued the Prince, "since you have ceded your rights over the other to me."

"My rights!" I cried, determined to maintain them; "Monseigneur, to-morrow—in a few days, with pleasure."

"You can resume them to-morrow, or when it seems good to you."

"No, by Heavens! It shall not be, Prince though you are, and before you make me a husband like most others, you shall at least wait for my permission."

"Dubois," he said, with animation, "it is only just that I should have my share in this jest, in which I have compromised myself with a rascal like yourself; the priority is mine for many reasons. . . ."

"The lion's reasons," I retorted: "the first is that you are called the Duc d'Orléans; the second is that you are the stronger; and, if I am to mention the third, that you would chastise me to begin with; there is the whole fable of La Fontaine."

The sarcasm produced an impression, for the Prince drew me on one side, and said to me in softened tones: "Listen, Dubois, I would pardon you these caprices if you had my birth and rank; you must really concede something to them. . . ."

"Yes; except my wife!"

"You are jesting; I should be sorry for you, if she were really your wife; the farce might end more tragically than it has begun."

"Very well!" I said, after reconsidering the matter, "how will you reward me for such a sacrifice?"

"I swear to you that on the King's death I will employ you in whatever way you desire."

"Will you make me minister?"

"Your pretensions are a little exalted, but, knowing your talent, I do not despair of seeing you in that position."

"Since it is your wish, it is enough to say that it is my wish too; but do not hope that the widow will be an accomplice in this conspiracy against my pleasures."

"That is my business. It would seem as though you had chosen the nuptial chamber in my interest; a little screened door in the alcove!"

"To be sure, Monseigneur, I thought of you! O, the power of princes! You make me a traitor to love! . . ."

"Old fool, I recommend you to talk of love at the age of fifty-seven, and after the pretty life you have led!"

"Do not doubt it, Monseigneur, I feel all the fire of a first attachment, and my wedding night will not have cooled it."

They came to inform me that the bride was in bed, and I entered the room with bowed head, and undressed myself in perfect silence, except for a sigh, to which Annette responded with another which pierced my heart. I knew that the Prince was at the door of the alcove, in the night costume which I had just so uselessly donned. My conscience felt remorse, and I was on the point of being ruined for ever, by giving myself up to the charms of the moment, when the Prince's voice recalled me to my duty. "Who is there?" said I, feigning the uneasiness of the newly married husband, whom the least noise alarms, and I opened the little door of the alcove, where I made a sign to the Prince to take my place, after having cried loudly: "The devil take you! it was worth while disturbing me for such a trifle!" I closed the door again with temper, leaving the task of com-

pleting the explanation to the Duc d'Orléans; I made my way towards a bed I believed to be vacant, and great was my astonishment to find myself in the conjugal company. I opposed my enemy to the utmost, and fell asleep quite consoled.

I was aroused with a start by the cries which issued from the adjoining chamber; my suspicion of what was happening gave me no time to clothe myself more decently, and I hastened to restore peace. The bride, informed of her mistake by the first rays of day, had uttered piercing cries in testimony of her innocence; I found her in a very appetising state of disorder, sobbing bitterly, and in extreme despair, in spite of the Duc d'Orléans' efforts to appease this violent grief. Directly I entered, she flung herself at my knees, saying: "My dear husband, pardon me, I am innocent; if you doubt it, kill me."

"Kill you! and why?"

"I am dishonoured! But I swear to you I had no share in what has happened!"

"I can believe you; I am responsible for everything."

"You, Monsieur?"

"Yes; and I love you none the less for it."

"Monsieur, Monsieur, do not trifle with my despair."

"'Egad! I thank you for it; you are as innocent as the babe—to be born nine months hence."

"Monster!"

"Where the devil, Madame, does the monster come in?"

"Miserable that I am! Where is the cavern dark enough to hide my shame?"

"Faith, Madame! there would be a lack of caverns, if one were needed for every faithless wife!"

"Hold your tongue, Abbé," cried the Prince, "enough impertinence! Madame, I implore you," he continued, taking a step towards her. . . .

"If you come one step nearer," said she, "I will throw myself out of the window."

Half-dressed, the elder Loysons and my legitimate wife appeared on the scene, the latter, bursting with joy at the sight of my embarrassment. She was ghastly pale, and had a fixed stare; later, I remembered these symptoms, hardly noticed at the time. The deplorable condition of Annette had such an effect on Madame Dubois' wits, that she had a nervous

attack, followed by convulsions, during which she rolled on the floor, foaming at the mouth, her teeth clenched. Had she died during this attack (which might easily have been the case), another case of poison would have been inevitably attributed to me! To believe certain folk, there is no such thing as a natural death amongst the great. The Loysons, at the sight of these horrible convulsions, cried out that the Dubois (the impudent creature retained my name), like herself, had been bitten by a mad dog, and, almost at the same moment, she too was seized with convulsions.

The fear of madness, a sort of panic terror to which the bravest are subject, drove us from the room. Annette fled into another chamber; the Prince and I followed her. As to the two women, whether their madness was real or imaginary, they were escorted to the sea, and cured — doubtless as a result of the tapers and prayers offered to Heaven by their kind friends of the Bois de Boulogne. One day of weeping exhausts the most profound grief; the widow, who had no suspicion that our marriage was a mockery, was touched by all that was said to her by the amiable Prince, who passed for M. Lucas. I contented myself with observing her, seeking for a favourable opportunity to resume my rights as a husband. I reproached myself with having sacrificed love to ambition, or, rather, I inwardly reproached the Prince with profiting by my critical position to steal my property. When night was come, I ventured to say:

"Madame, you must be tired after a day spent in weeping; will you be pleased to come and take a little repose?"

"Wretch, do you wish to insult my misery?"

"Assuredly not, madame; but, since I am your husband, must I not fulfil my duties?"

"Traitor, if you ever come near me, I will not promise not to treat you as you deserve."

"Wicked woman, am I not your lord and master?"

"You are my executioner."

"Come now, your eyes have amply repaid me any harm I have done you."

I was set upon a decisive revenge. She repulsed me with so expressive an indignation, that I judged it was not the moment to renew my vain attempts. The Duc d'Orléans

commanded me to respect my wife, and I obeyed that I might have, at least, that merit in his eyes. The widow perceived the empire the Prince had over me, and made use of it to defend herself against my conjugal attacks.

"Monsieur," she said, with a grace which moved me to the verge of tears, "if so be you can make this man obey you, order him to leave my presence, or, at least, never to speak to me."

"Abbé," said the Prince, with an imperative air, "you hear. I should be displeased if you were to disobey this order."

"'Sdeath, M. Lucas," I cried, "you go too far. Have I only taken a wife for your usage? I want my share, and I will have it as the law permits."

"Abbé," replied the Prince, "believe me, we have both sinned against Madame."

"A plague on it! I wish my sin had been like yours. In short, there is nothing I will not do to be agreeable to you and Madame alike."

"Take yourself off, then."

We retired to bed, each in separate directions, and in the morning I saw with pleasure that nothing was left of Annette's despair, but red eyes and an air of melancholy. The Duc d'Orléans, who had almost succeeded in obtaining pardon for the "*great liberty*," as they say at Brives-la-Gaillarde, held a council with my widow, and, according to our agreement, I listened without having the right of proferring my opinion.

"What is to become of me!" said Annette, with lamentations. "After my misfortune, I can never go back to my shop."

"I know, too well, the repugnance you have for your husband, and I shall not persuade you to live with him."

"Truly, Monseigneur," I interrupted, "you could not give a lady better advice."

"Monseigneur!" she said, with astonishment.

I perceived my blunder when it was too late to repair it, and I refrained from dwelling upon it.

"Madame," resumed the Duc d'Orléans, "would it be your pleasure to retire to the country?"

"Doubtless," I added, "somewhere two or three hundred leagues from Paris!"

"M. Dutrot," said the Prince, severely, "who is speaking to you?"

"Alas! anywhere where I shall not see this monster, I shall be as happy as one can be, when one has only death before one."

My love waxed greater in proportion to her hatred, and it was with sensible distaste that I saw myself compelled to renounce the sight of her. The Duc d'Orléans reimbursed me largely for all the expenses of my pretended marriage. By his command, I bought a house at Surênes, which I furnished sumptuously; it was there that my widow cloistered herself, to hide a fault which was none of hers. Melancholy had its term; she ended by pardoning the Prince, and forgetting me entirely. I had not enough philosophy to imitate her, when a tragical incident dealt her sensitiveness a mortal blow.

Since Samuel Bernard had become a creditor of the King, his pride had waxed as his fortune waned. He talked of nothing but His Majesty, millions, and women. The latter, whom he estimated in proportion to the price they set upon themselves, vied with Louis XIV in engulfing his gold. Samuel had his procurers in the country all the year round, and the expense he indulged in was in excess of his needs, while the conquests he owed to the avarice of great ladies gave him an opinion of his person which he would fain see shared by all the world. He reached the point of believing he was beautiful. Whence his sacrifices in order to carry off the mistresses of the most favoured courtiers. In this he often succeeded by building for these faithless ones a bridge of gold.

The disappearance of the widow of the Palais-Marchand had irritated his self-conceit; a refusal from a *grisette* seemed to him an outrage, and to obtain satisfaction he would have expended vast sums. His agents could not discover what had become of Annette. He applied to M. d'Argenson, who sold dearly, and for ready money, the oracle of the police. Samuel Bernard learned with equal surprise and anger that the Duc d'Orléans had outwitted him; he swore to supplant the Prince in his turn, if he had to reach the Danaë of Surênes in a shower of gold. There were no guards to be put to sleep, nor bolts to break, in order to enter this sanctuary. He found Annette more beautiful than ever; she also found him more hideous, another comparison to the advantage of the Prince.

"My Venus," he said, "since the King walked with me

in his park of Marly, I have had no pleasure equal to that I feel in seeing you again."

"What brings you here, Monsieur?" she said. "Have you been sent by the infamous Abbé Dutrot?"

"For shame, my dear! Do you think Samuel Bernard is the man to traffic with abbés, petty folk fit for the ante-chamber or the kitchen?"

"To be brief, what do you want, Monsieur?"

"What can I want save yourself, a morsel fit for a king or Samuel Bernard."

"Leave me, Monsieur, and beware of being seen. . . ."

"The Prince? Is that it, little one?"

"You are jesting! Ah! what a villain you are. I don't know what reason you have for coming to insult me in my own house."

"Come with me; I will give you a finer one, more richly furnished, better supplied with servants. . . . Monseigneur is not a banker; he does things meanly."

"Monseigneur!"

"It was that knave of an Abbé Dubois, who ferreted you out; I know everything. I will do him an ill turn with the King and the ministry."

"The Abbé Dubois! Great Heaven!"

"The Duc d'Orléans can boast of having the boldest of all rascals in his service!"

This revelation came upon Annette like a thunderbolt; she fell back unconscious. Samuel Bernard made off at the commotion which ensued in the house. I had been sent by the Prince, as a special messenger, under the pretext of informing the widow of an indisposition which prevented him from coming to see her. He was beginning to weary of her, and I aspired to become his successor. Annette had been carried to her bed, and the first words she uttered informed me of the cause of the disaster: "The Abbé Dubois! The Duc d'Orléans!" she repeated, in a state of dire delirium. I realised that Samuel Bernard had betrayed our secret. I attempted every consolation that was in my power; the Duc d'Orléans was equally unsuccessful. Annette had lost her reason; a violent fever carried her off after a fortnight's suffering. The Prince's affection came to life again beside this bed of death, and many a time his tears were mingled with my own.

When Annette had ceased to exist, I took the Prince back to the Palais-Royal; he wished to die with her. The Comtesse d' Argenton took advantage of these circumstances, wherein the Duc d' Orléans had need of a fair consoler, to win back to herself that frail heart so made for love. The Prince was attached to her from habit, and he treated her as his mistress until he had taken his inconstancy elsewhere. These amorous revivals never lasted long, and this, I believe, was the last of them. Madame d' Argenton was at no further pains to hide the fact of her repaying the Prince for his infidelities a hundred-fold.

I went to pay the last homage to the poor widow, who had assisted us to deceive herself; I did not claim the title of husband, which had brought so little profit to me during the two months she lived under the name of Madame Dutrot. The regrets with which I honoured her memory were more real than my marriage. I would gladly have substituted her death for that of another, who continues to enjoy good health in spite of all my wishes to the contrary. On the day after the funeral, I received this laconic epistle from my first wife:

"Monsieur my husband, my heart is so set on thwarting you that I am not yet dead; assuredly, I am less mad than you will be on the receipt of this news."

I sent to the devils this carrion which the devils would not take, and let her know, under my own hand, that if she ventured to break our agreement by letting our relation transpire, I would stop her pension and cast her into an underground dungeon. My threat proved effective.

The Duc d' Orléans was so impressed by the sudden death of the widow of Surênes, that he accused me of it, in order to tranquillise his conscience. He always spoke of her as *my victim*; this gave him relief, and I let him talk. One day he met Samuel Bernard at Court, and was unable to master his resentment.

"Monsieur," he said, "if I were King of France, I would have you hanged above the grave of a lady you have murdered."

"Monseigneur," replied the banker, "I am sure you are making a mistake. Do you take me for a doctor? I am Samuel Bernard; my fortune amounts to thirty-eight millions, and I lend money to all Europe. His Majesty so far esteems me that he has himself shown me his gardens at Marly."

CHAPTER XXV

THE POST OF SECRETARY TO THE DUC DE BERRI—DUBOIS SOLICITS IT — LONGPIERRE — INFAMOUS RUMOURS ABOUT THE DUCHESSE DE BERRI — HER LOVER, LA HAYE — A HUSBAND'S GRIEVANCES—THE KICK

THE post of secretary of commands to the Duc de Berri was vacant in 1709. I should not have been sorry to obtain it; but another, who was better with the Court, anticipated me; M. Pothon bought this office, which was more honourable than lucrative. Pothon died, and I was eager to succeed him. All my patrons lent their efforts to this end. The Duc d' Orléans promised me marvels, and his heart was set on keeping his word. Massillon offered me his services with Madame de Maintenon, whom I had ceased to see; he succeeded in persuading her to interest herself in me. The Maintenon asked the King to do her the favour of securing me the post. She met with this reply: "In God's name, Madame, talk to me no more of this rascal Abbé; I know him so well that I deem him fit for nothing but the gallows." Possibly it was Madame de Maintenon who put these somewhat harsh remarks in the King's mouth; she was thus rid of my importunities, in which I was assisted by a score of persons. I would take no rebuff, and tried to obtain an entry to the old woman, hoping to win her to my side with a few courtly flatteries; she obstinately refused to see me. This mortification put me to the blush before the lackeys; the contempt which the Maintenon openly displayed for my person vexed me more than anything.

"See," I said to Massillon, "the Maintenon has treated me as a worthless abbé; and rogues of lackeys think they have a right to be disrespectful to me."

"It is not worth troubling about," said Massillon; "if you are so set upon appreciation, you need only show yourself in Madame de Maintenon's ante-chamber, inquire after her health, come out loudly with the Duc d' Orléans' name, and the gentlemen in livery will look upon you as a personage."

"The deuce! If I ever set foot again inside that old intriguer's door, it will be to cast some home-truths at her."

"Have you no chance, then, of getting the place in question?"

"I have a thousand chances; yet you will see I shall not get it."

I thought to utilise the hold which the Duc d'Orléans had forcibly acquired over Père Le Tellier, and a letter which he wrote to that sour Jesuit would have met with the success I anticipated, but for the prejudices of the King, who said, in answer to his urgent solicitations:

"Father, I am not fond of being worried, nor of those who worry me; I wish to be left alone." He softened, however, at the severe glance his confessor darted at him. "Father," he added, with a smile, "it is not befitting that Heaven should plead the cause of hell. This Dubois is a man for hanging."

I did not altogether lose courage. The Duc d'Orléans, in spite of the bad odour he was in at Versailles, consented to come forward there in my behalf.

"At least, Monseigneur," I said, before he started, "I beg you to do nothing, unless you are resolved to speak with boldness and energy."

Louis XIV only heard him to the end, in order to disconcert him, like the others, with a dry, decisive, and contemptuous refusal. I guessed from the Prince's displeased expression that his attempt had not succeeded.

"Well, Monseigneur," I cried, "is it good news?"

"As bad as your own reputation, my dear Dubois; your very name is your worst enemy."

"Bah! Monseigneur," I answered, with effrontery, "'tis not thus that favours are obtained. You recommended me tepidly, and as a matter of form; the King thought you were not over keen on obtaining what you asked."

"Who gave you these details?"

"Some one well informed apparently. I agree with La Fontaine, that it is better to have a hundred enemies than one imprudent friend."

This little outburst of temper on my part did not last, and I renounced the place, which was granted the next day to the Baron de Longpierre, who had been tutor to the Comte de Toulouse, and was still tutor to the Duc de Chartres. He knew

a little Greek and Latin, in default of other admirers greatly admired himself, translated verses into flat and wordy French, amplified antique tragedies, and was in his entirety a mighty vain, dull, and tedious fellow. One was tempted to slumber whenever he opened his mouth. Nevertheless, I did not long envy him his post of secretary to the Duc de Berri. That Prince died, suddenly enough to revive sinister suspicions which they no longer dared to fix upon the Duc d' Orléans, his father-in-law.

The Duchesse de Berri brought no self-restraint to her gallant affairs with the young lords; the malevolence, which is so busy with the names of princes, envenomed her most innocent follies. The scandal was so public even, that I remember hearing this couplet, composed by the Duchesse de Berri's coachman, sung by a cobbler of the Rue Richelieu; it is she herself who is assumed to be speaking:

"Quel plaisir d' avoir à mon age
Eu tous les bergers du village!
C'est un pur abus
Que la constance,
Les derniers venus
Sont ceux qui dansent."

Without doubt, her behaviour with her father was often scandalously frivolous, and Louis XIV gravely reprimanded the latter, who should have had that amount of reason his daughter lacked; but neither of them deserved this horrible epigram of young Arouet, who never confesses the ill he does:

"Ce n'est pas le fils, c'est le père;
C'est la fille et non pas la mère;
A cela près tout est au mieux.
Ils ont déjà fait Etéocle,
Et s'il vient à perdre les yeux,
C'est le vrai sujet de Sophocle."

This was what was being said openly, and the Cabal of Sceaux encouraged, paid for, and spread abroad these infamies. Madame de Berri only laughed at them, and the Duc d' Orléans paid no attention.

"Do you want me," he said, "to increase my enemies' joy by taking their attacks to heart? They want to drive me to desperation, and are furious that they do not succeed."

"No, Monseigneur," I answered, "their aim is more perfidious; they hope, by these imfamous stories, to alienate the respect and love of all from you."

"In that case, they will still fail again; those who know me will not be caught in such clumsy snares; I care little for the opinion of those who do not know me."

"You are wrong, Monseigneur; no opinion is safely to be despised; public opinion is formed of the mass of individual opinions."

"No father will ever believe in these atrocities."

For my part, whether I am a father or not, I should not believe even if I had seen the thing.

The most inexplicable caprices governed the liaisons which the Duchesse de Berri formed and broke with like facility. Her lovers of to-day did not resemble those of yesterday in the least; her preference was for foul faces rather than fair, common rather than noble. A dark lover succeeded to a fair one, a dullard to a man of wit, and love was gone as quickly as it had come. The one passion which, amidst a thousand infidelities, she maintained for nearly three years, has still the air of a caprice. It was one of the King's pages who inspired it, not one of those gallant, dainty pages such as are to be seen, but a long, lean, loutish fop with a most unprepossessing face. This purple-faced Adonis was named La Haye, a son of some peasant or apothecary like myself, but with nothing to redeem this disadvantage. The Duchess singled him out amongst a score of younger, more handsome and experienced lovers. She threw herself upon his mercy before he had taken a step to meet her, and, withal, his coldness only served to fan the Princess to a whiter heat. She addressed him glowing letters and amorous verse, which he scarcely read, if he read at all. This La Haye, who had all the conceit of stupidity, said one day, in Ravannes' presence:

"I spent two hours before my mirror, telling myself the Duchess's taste was not so bad."

"I will wager," retorted Ravannes, "that all the time you were blushing as usual."

Madame de Berri interested herself in his fortunes, and established him as her husband's squire; she attached him closer to her person, by entitling him her chamberlain; she made him sleep in a closet adjacent to her chamber, so jealous was she of

his claret-coloured face. The Duc de Berri, on his side, had always his beloved chamber-maid. Consequently, perfect peace reigned in the household.

The Duc de Berri was little concerned that the Duchess should enjoy all the liberty of a widow; he would even have permitted the scandal, if he had not connived at it; but ridicule penetrates the thickest hide; a jest is often more potent than reason. The Duc de Berri overheard a valet say to his comrade:

"M. de Berri will never be King."

"Why?" asked the other rogue.

"Because his wife has taken care to give him horns which will push the crown off his head."

It was a sally of the ante-chamber which could not be taken up. On another occasion, La Haye, either from insolence or inadvertence, forgot to raise his hat when passing in front of him.

"Monsieur," said the Prince, "which of us is the Duc de Berri?"

At last, as a climax to his grievances, he felt a certain conjugal longing; but his wife received him with her nails, and the marks of them were sooner gone than his rancour.

He was in this frame of mind when he found a letter written by his wife to La Haye, in which she urged him to incredibly foolish exploits. The Duc de Saint-Simon, his confidant and intimate at all seasons, seeing him so incensed against the Duchess, whom (I dare not suspect why) he was ever anxious to thwart, showed him other letters and verses in which the Court made merry at his expense. The Duc de Berri, who was easily moved and veered round to the least wind, issued suddenly from his indifference, and swore he would confine his wife in a convent, like the fathers of comedy. Full of this idea, which he thought was bound to succeed, he set off for Rambouillet, where the King was staying. La Haye, as his duty was, accompanied him, and the Duchesse de Berri, who was uncomfortable at her favourite's absence, arrived at Rambouillet almost at the same time. M. de Berri had changed his usual character, which was constrained, silent, and timidly dull. His most pressing need was to see the King, whom he encountered in the gardens with the Maintenon. He had come to the recital of his griefs, and was bringing out the incriminating letters, when Madame de Berri rushed in like a madcap.

"Monsieur," said the King to his grandson, "youth will have its fling; your wife will not always conduct herself thus, and, to my view, the most disastrous course would be a scandal. I will have no hand in it."

"Sire, Sire," cried Madame de Berri, "you, who are so courteous, deign to scold my husband for leaving Paris, with all his household, without informing me."

"Madame," said the Duc de Berri, "what have you to say about this letter?"

"That is certainly not addressed to you," she answered.

"Madame, you deserve . . ."

"Mon Dieu! let us leave our deserts and think of our diversions."

The Duc de Berri, choking with anger, seized a moment when the Duchess was pirouetting round the King, to give her a brutal kick, which sent her reeling into Madame de Maintenon's arms.

"Monsieur," cried the King, raising his cane, "you are shameless, and it is only out of self-respect that I do not treat you as you deserve."

"Berri," said the Duchess, weeping, "if I were a man you would not have behaved in such a cowardly way."

"Madame," replied the King, "he was begging me just now to shut you up in a convent; but it is he who shall go to a state-prison."

"Sire," said the Prince, "I am confused at my reprehensible outbreak of passion, and I beg you to pardon me."

"Address that prayer to Madame," said the King, "and submit in advance to the reparation she demands."

"Sire," said the Duchess, with a smile, "is it not just that I should exercise the right of retaliation?" Waiting for no reply, she effected her reprisals, which were gentle enough, having regard to the affront. "Kiss me, M. de Berri," she said, "and this time have no fear of my nails; in the daytime my paws are velvet."

Thus the reconciliation was patched up; but the Duc de Berri, urged on by the Maintenon against his wife and the Duc d'Orléans, promised himself to be avenged, when death overtook him, with a good confession for his only consolation.

Madame de Berri was warned that obstacles were being planned against her amours, and, perhaps, worse (for who knows to what extent a prince's vengeance will be carried?). She was

determined enough by nature to be afraid of none of his attempts against her; but she was frightened at the peril incurred by La Haye. She knew him to be of so timorous a stamp that she concealed her project until the last moment. She summoned him one night to her room, which he found full of boxes and preparations for a journey. She was dressed from tip to toe; he was not.

"La Haye," said she, "make haste, and let us be off."

"What talk is this of being off," he said, with a dazed air; "better go to bed."

"We are going to Holland."

"I!"

"You are running away with me."

"I am running away with you! And what for?"

"If you prefer it, I am running away with you!"

"What is the good of it, please?"

"I am uneasy about our future; the Duc de Berri wishes to be avenged on us both; he has underhand projects; I have foreseen everything; a carriage awaits us; in two days we shall be out of France."

"Good God! Madame, whatever may happen, I will be more prudent than you."

With these words, he made his escape, and shut himself up in his room, fearful of being forcibly abducted; three days later the Duchesse de Berri had ceased to think of her journey.

The Prince, her husband, lived on no worse terms with her, as far as appearances went, after the kicks which had been mutually exchanged; he frequently took her out hunting for whole days, which she spent on horseback, galloping with the huntsmen. On the 2nd of May 1714, the Duc de Berri was chasing the boar; his wife accompanied him; the heat on that day was enormous. Madame de Berri, suffering from fatigue, got into her carriage, which followed the hunt at a distance; she came across her husband, separated from his huntsmen and his suite.

"Have you anything to drink?" he asked.

"Yes," said she, "some ratafia of cherries that I have prepared myself; pay me the compliment of tasting it."

He drank greedily, and almost immediately complained of shivering. He was taken back to the château, where he was put to bed, and nursed in an exemplary manner by his wife. He

died in three days, disturbed in his mind at the recollection of the ratafia.

"It is written," said Louis XIV, with sorrowful resignation, "that I am to survive all my family!"

This death excited great consternation, and the Jansenists declared that the angel of death was waging war against the Constitution. The firm attitude of the Duc d'Orléans imposed silence on any fresh calumnies. He said to me one day, on leaving his chemical laboratory:

"I have just chanced to read again the Century of Nostradamus."

The first use the Duchesse de Berri made of her widowhood was to send away La Haye, loaded with money and honours.

Louis XIV had become steeled against misfortune after all his prosperity; Religion, or rather the Constitution, alone had power to break through his moral indifference; he had no longer eyes for anything on earth but Madame de Maintenon and Père Le Tellier. The death of the Duc de Berri produced no impression on him, except in so far as it recalled the memory of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, whom he never ceased to regret. He was seized with such gloom on this account, that Madame de Maintenon thought it incumbent on her to put an end to it.

"Sire," she said, "it is good and just to weep for the death of persons one has loved."

"What would you imply?" retorted Louis XIV, abruptly.

"Your despair at the death of the second Dauphine has always seemed to me misplaced."

"Once more, what is it you would say?"

"That our affections like our dislikes are often deceived, and I recommend you not to feel this excessive regret for the Duchesse de Bourgogne."

"This is singular language from your lips."

"It is the language of truth, Sire, and these letters will prove to you that treachery may often have a charming exterior."

She gave the King a casket of letters, all in the Dauphine's handwriting, and containing the proofs of her treason with her father, the Duke of Savoy. Louis XIV read them with dumb sorrow, then destroyed them, lest anyone else should penetrate into these wretched family secrets. Madame de Maintenon was not satisfied with this; she confessed to the King all that she had

hitherto concealed from him concerning the Dauphine's irregular life.

"Alas!" cried His Majesty, weeping; "I see clearly that nothing is sure here below except the love of God!"

These revelations, so far from destroying his great grief, only added to it a sovereign contempt for all mankind.

The death of the Duc de Berri came near to profiting the Duc du Maine, who, perhaps, was no stranger to the causes of it. There remained only one Dauphin of the Royal family, and he so frail and feeble, and surrounded by plotters, that he seemed unlikely to reign. He had already been poisoned once, and the antidote, which saved him, left him with a black spot on the breast which never disappeared. They counted so little on this young life that the Court began to return to the Duc d'Orléans as heir-presumptive to the Crown. The King had married the Duc de Bourbon to Mademoiselle de Conti, and the Prince de Conti to Mademoiselle de Bourbon; he sought to renew his Court, which had been so rapidly mowed down; but these two couples, youthful still, were in sad contrast with the old age of the monarch, who alone survived his children and grandchildren. The Duc du Maine, assisted by the Maintenon and Père Le Tellier, won an easy triumph over the feebleness and indifference of the King, who, as early as 1710, had extended the prerogatives accorded to the bastards to their children, giving them precedence over all dukes and peers. This innovation had given rise to much murmuring; it was far worse when people came to hear of the advantages given to the bastards by a secret testament of the King. The Duc d'Orléans was forewarned by the Chancellor Voisin, and the Duc de Saint-Simon, of the existence of this testament and of its contents.

The Duc de Saint-Simon is a courtier pliant to the circumstance; he adopts all tones, all airs, all masks, all allures; thus the same day will see him mild and choleric, flattering and brutal, frank and false; for the rest, he is always mounted on his hobby-horse of genealogy, which is his one science. Of mortal sins he knows only a false title of nobility, or, which is all one to him, a title of yesterday. Speak to him of blazons, arms, and alliances, and you will see him display his knowledge in the matter of dates, anecdotes, and observations. It is his happiness, his life; you must see him unravel a pedigree, track it to its most obscure

origins, discover its foreign ramifications, what he calls the *creepers* round a genealogical tree; he loudly asserts that he is nobler by two quarterings than the King of France, and it is amazing to hear him discuss the degrees of kinsmanship between the foremost houses. Speak of the most indifferent object, he comes out with some escutcheon on a field gules or azure. Mention a town, a château, a shanty, he has always some Saint-Simon of yore in reserve whom he plants there like a standard. He had completely broken with Madame, who was as mad upon pedigrees as himself, and that because he had proved to her that the Palatines had more than once *degraded* themselves by alliances with daughters of the counts of the Empire.

"M. de Saint-Simon," she said, "is jealous of all nobility; if one were to believe him, there is no one except himself whose blood is pure and unmixed; I presume the little coxcomb does not remember that one of his cousins was groom to Madame de Schomberg."

Madame might have added that this groom had a brother whose fortunes were even meaner. As for Saint-Simon, he does not bog himself in explanations; out of a certain *Le Bossu*, a burgess and judge of Mayence, who married an heiress of the elder branch of his house, he makes, in a stroke of the pen, a most high and puissant personage of the house of Bossu. Even out of my name of *Dubois*, with a little good-will, he might do something. The hatred with which he honours me originated thus. I ventured to say to him jokingly:

"Do you think, M. le Duc, that our ancestors may not have been relations by marriage a thousand years ago?"

"Impossible, Monsieur," he answered, drily.

"Why not? My name may have changed on the way, like so many others." He flushed, and did not answer. "However," I added, "if it were permissible for a Cardinal to have legitimate children, I think you would not refuse an alliance between our two houses."

"I would consent to anything rather than undergo such dishonour."

"Plague! A dishonour that means more than a hundred thousand livres a year is not to be had for the asking, M. le Duc."

Since this discussion, he has treated me with as much contempt as though I had been a groom of Madame de Schomberg's. The

Duc de Saint-Simon did not consider he was contracting a mis-alliance in marrying a daughter of the Maréchal de Lorges, who is hideous, and in compensation most haughty; she makes it a boast that no one has ever conspired against her impregnable virtue. I thoroughly believe her. Of her two children, the daughter is monstrously ugly and insipid; that does not prevent her from having a pedigree which goes back to 980. The Duc has, at any rate, a human face. He is noticeable for a stiffness of carriage, which is extended to his manners and his mind; his eyes are deep-set and keen; his physiognomy is of marble; his speech is short, and his voice harsh. His style, on the contrary, is a model of prolixity and obscurity; whenever he writes a report, the Regent says to him constantly:

"M. de Saint-Simon, for mercy's sake, a full stop."

"All that I can do, Monseigneur, is to put in a colon or semi-colon."

"Your sentences," I said to him one day, "are like your pedigree; they have neither beginning nor end."

Notwithstanding, there are admirable qualities in his manner of writing, new and original expressions, words which bite. It is known that he is writing his memoirs, and he makes no secret of it; they are only known, however, by report.

"'Tis naked truth I am releasing from her well," he said to me one day.

"Take care," I answered, "or truth will send you to the Bastille, and no one will release you."

"I am not afraid. These memoirs will not be published until after my death; they will cause a prodigious disturbance."

"Especially amongst the students of heraldry."

Saint-Simon, for all his exceeding ambition, had not yet succeeded in playing a great part; his Embassy to Spain did not bring him the notoriety he desired; his campaigns in Flanders had not distinguished him as a capable commander; Louis XIV looked upon him as the first *pedigree* in France. Saint-Simon, having been brought up with the Duc d'Orléans and the Duc du Maine, fluctuated between these two Princes, uncertain as to which destiny to follow. He needed much skill in order to drift from one to the other without quarrelling with both. The precedence over dukes and peers accorded to the children and descendants of the Duc du Maine inspired him with an aversion

for the latter Prince. None the less, when slander assailed the Duc d' Orléans, and he found himself deserted even by his creatures, he wavered more than ever, taking a step forward only to recede a pace. At last he came to a tardy decision, and declared himself on the side of the Duc d' Orléans, whose innocence he proclaimed, to the detriment of the Duc du Maine. When the Duc de Berri died, he hesitated again, remained neutral for some time, and then returned, with more heat than ever, to the Duc d' Orléans, having a presentiment that he would become Regent or King. I will wager that he would have cursed himself if the Regency had fallen to the Duc du Maine on the death of Louis XIV.

One night, Saint-Simon arrived in breathless haste at the Palais-Royal, and closeted himself privately with the Duc d' Orléans, who was undisturbed at these great pretensions to mystery, knowing the man to be essentially a comedian. But this time it was no comedy; on the same night, His Royal Highness related to me the details of their interview.

"Monseigneur," said Saint-Simon, "I have come to inform you of a piece of news which has transpired to-day, and which will greatly surprise you."

"What is it, pray, Monsieur?"

"The King has made his will."

"A will! From whom have you heard this?"

"From the first President, who holds the key of a safe hidden in the wall of a tower in the Palace, guarded by two iron doors, in which the will has been secreted. . . ."

"Full stops, M. de Simon! and we shall understand each other better."

"It is certain His Majesty has made his will, at the point of the dagger or the crucifix, for he said to Madame de Maintenon: 'I have been worried into making my will. I have purchased peace at this price; I know the impotence of the act, not to speak of its uselessness, for in life we can do all we will, but dead, we are less than the least of our subjects. What effect had the will of the King, my father, after his death? I knew this, but they would not have it. I had no peace or quiet until it was done. Therefore, Madame, what will be, will be; it is no longer my concern; I feel only regret for it.' The King said almost the same things to Messieurs de Mesmes and d'Aguesseau, when he gave it to them."

"This forebodes no good; but are you ignorant of the tenor of the will?"

"It is a serpent about to shed its skin; it must be torn in pieces, carefully, lest the head and tail be patched together again. The will concerns M. du Maine. The King said to him severely: 'It was your wish, Monsieur; but if, however great I may make you and you may be in my lifetime, you are nothing when I am gone, it is for you to maintain, if you can, what I have done for you; and God be on your side! After all, I do not count on it.'"

"There is no doubt that M. du Maine has been raised to my detriment? . . ."

"To the detriment of the great nobility of France!"

"Well, what is your advice?"

"If my advice has any weight, Monseigneur, I advise you to make sure of the chief noble houses, to win over the troops and the Parliament, and to hold yourself in readiness as though the King might die to-morrow."

"His term is drawing near; I know it from my experiments with the water-glass."

"Away with chemistry or magic, Monseigneur! Our gentlemen of the Parliament understand no jesting on such matters."

"Monsieur, you may depend on my gratitude sooner or later; in the meantime, accept my friendship."

The rumour of this will soon reached the public ear, and excited inexpressible consternation; all the slanders by which the Duc d'Orléans had been assailed, gave way to the liveliest interest; the injustice done him revolted every heart; there were murmurs against Louis XIV; the Duc du Maine was despised; people were excited against the Maintenon, that evil genius of Père Le Tellier. The Duc d'Orléans, in order to encourage himself to spare no effort to maintain his rights, constantly repeated to himself, as well as to his intimates: "I have the cause of my children to uphold!" Madame, whom he informed of his projects, far from dissuading him, excited him against the "old hag," the "little cripple," and the "petty pope." It was thus she designated the favourite, the bastard, and the confessor.

Following Saint-Simon's advice, the buttresses of the Constitution were called in to uphold the House of Orléans; the Cardinal de Noailles joyously entered into a league against the Cardinals de Bissy and De Rohan; the Jansenists made stout

array against the Jesuits. These latter were in ill odour with the Parliament, because Père Le Tellier had debarred the children of the Magistracy from the great benefices; it was his vengeance against them for a certain condemnation. . . . The Parliament threw itself into the league of His Royal Highness; the Duc de Guiche, Colonel of the French guard, won over the officers of that corps, which was then in Paris; other regiments were induced to a like defection. Saint-Simon arranged with the Dukes and Peers. It was necessary to negotiate and draw up a formal treaty. Conferences were held at the Palais-Royal and the Archiepiscopal Palace. Argenson, the lieutenant of police, entirely devoted to His Highness' service, shut his eyes to these secret and nocturnal assemblies, at which the Cardinal de Noailles assisted, with the President de Maisons, M. d'Aguesseau, procurer-general, M. Joly de Fleury, advocate-general, the Abbés de Fortia, Pucelles, Gaumont; the Ducs de Saint-Simon and De Guiche. Lord Stanhope, who chanced to be passing through Paris, was admitted, not without reason, to these councils, whither each member repaired by night through some of the houses adjoining the Palais-Royal. His part was to secure us the alliance of the King of England, in the event of His Royal Highness being compelled to have recourse to arms. In a short time the dispositions of the will became known.

Louis XIV, in his will, set down the form of government which he desired to see followed after his death; he established a Council of Regency, the members of which he nominated, and in which affairs were to be settled by a majority of voices; the Duc d' Orléans was declared head of this Council, without any other prerogative than that of the presidentship. This Council was to be composed of the Duc de Bourbon, when he should have completed his twenty-fourth year; of the Duc du Maine, the Comte de Toulouse, the Chancellor, the Maréchals de Villeroi, De Tallard, De Villars, and d' Harcourt; the four secretaries of state, and the controller-general. The young King was put under the guardianship and tutelage of the Council of Regency, and the Duc du Maine, as head and absolute commander of the King's household, had the charge of watching over his safety. A pretty guardian! Finally, the Duc de Villeroi was appointed his governor, Père Le Tellier his confessor, and Fleury his tutor.

The opposition will, which was drawn up at the Palais-Royal, was more careful of our interests. It was agreed, after ample deliberation, that the Duc d'Orléans should be declared Regent of the Kingdom, and that the King's person should be confided to him, as well as the general command of the troops and the distribution of all favours. This clause was inserted with a view to myself. We decided that the Cardinal de Noailles should be chief of the Council of Conscience; that the Président de Maisons, or, in his default, M. d'Aguesseau, should have the office of Chancellor; that M. Joly de Fleury should succeed M. d'Aguesseau as procurer-general; that the Abbés Fortia, Pucelles, and Gaumont should be honourably and lucratively employed; that in everything the Parliament should be consulted and heeded, and restored to its former privileges; finally, our Jansenists demanded that Père Le Tellier and his familiars, the Fathers Doucin and Germon, should be ignominiously expelled and exiled; that there should be no more talk of the *Constitution*, and that Port-Royal should be reconstructed. We agreed to everything, ready to refuse in due time and season. I was mighty careful not to reserve any petty share in the Regency for myself; I wanted a large one, and, thanks be to God, I have not missed it! The others, for the most part, had to be satisfied with promises.

Stanhope returned to London. The Duc d'Orléans, who knew me to be instinctively a diplomatist, ordered me to accompany him on a secret mission to George I. The Duc du Maine was so assured of the efficacy of the will, that he slumbered in his confidence, and refused to heed the warnings proffered him. However, as much attention had been given to the conduct of the Duc d'Orléans and his agents, I was prudent enough to disguise the nature of my journey, of which someone informed the King.

"Good!" said he, "the Abbé is going to see his English friends."

"His friends are not yours, Sire," retorted Tallard, who had never forgotten our Embassy.

I disarmed suspicion, however, by taking the road to Orléans, where I arrived at midnight, and descended at the house of the Chevalier de Longueville, a gentleman of the Duc d'Orléans; he received me with distinguished honour, and gave me that

which a weary traveller prefers before all things—a good supper and a good bed. I rose before day, and thanked Longueville for his hospitality.

"I like your house," said I, "for one has pleasant dreams in it; I myself dreamed that I was a Cardinal."

My sojourn in England was short and mysterious; I succeeded in serving my master beyond my hopes. King George received me favourably, and as the Regent's plenipotentiary. I will not repeat here what I have said of this negotiation in my Journal,* wherein I have included the documents and letters. Finally, in the course of this journey, I received for the last time the pension which I owed to English munificence. Subsequently, I ceased all private relations with that government. But I confess that so long as Louis XIV reigned, or rather the Maintenon, I looked upon this money as my due. Away with scruples! The secret of my return to France was not revealed, and when I descended at the Palais-Royal, I encountered Maréchal, pale and breathless. He whispered to me, shaking his head: "The King is lost!"

* It would seem from this passage and several others that Dubois wrote some political memoirs, of which no one appears to be cognisant. [*Editor's note.*]

END OF VOLUME I

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